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ABSTRACT

A broad spectrum of ideas and practices that should enable colleges to reassess and/or develop strategies for relating to the public are included in this sourcebook. Topics include (1) a model for public relations that includes development and internal and external communication; (2) the necessity of the personal involvement of the chief executive in the public relations program; (3) steps for reaching special-needs clientele in a community-based program; (4) establishing communications with non-traditional students as demonstrated at Phoenix College, Arizona; (5) the use of free public service coverage on radio and television; (6) approaches for improving information for student decision-making; (7) the legal regulations affecting public relations; (8) clarifying the image of professional public relations workers, particularly for legislators; (9) the evaluation of public relations efforts; and (10) public relations as the job of every college employee. A review of pertinent literature and a bibliography are also provided. Contributors include: William A. Harper, Benjamin R. Wygal, William A. Keim, Maggie Eitzen, James M. Richmond, Bonnie Elcsser, James N. Nash, Jr., Billy O. Boyles, Doris Slocum and T. Earle Johnson, Jr., Louis W. Bender, and Elizabeth Rinnander. (Author/RT)

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improving relations with the public

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New Directions for Community Colleges
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contents

editors' notes — *louis w. bender, benjamin r. wygal* — **vii**

components of a model public relations program — *william a. harper* — **1**

Internal and external communication, as well as development, should be included in a program that will bring about widespread understanding and support.

public relations: concepts, authority, control — *benjamin r. wygal* — **11**

Establishing the public relations component requires the personal involvement and direction of the chief executive.

planning PR for a community-based program — *william a. keim* — **19**

Specific steps need to be taken with the community in marketing community-based community college programs.

communication with special populations — *maggie eitzen* — **27**

The efforts of Phoenix College in Arizona illustrate how a college can establish successful communication with nontraditional students.

tapping the "free" TV and radio market — *james m. richmond* — **35**

Colleges can promote their educational mission and programs through free public service coverage on radio and television.

the right of the student consumer to be better informed — *bonnie elosser* — **43**

Institutions need to examine their public relations programs for misleading and inaccurate statements and develop specific ways to give students the information they need for making decisions.

will you be sued this year? the legal aspects of public relations — *james n. nash, jr.* — **53**

Laws and regulations affecting the public relations function must be adhered to if legal entanglement due to wrong words or pictures is to be avoided.

views of the purse-string holders — *billy o. boyles* — **63**

College public relations people must establish clear images of themselves and their institutions in the minds of those who appropriate their funds.

assessing public relations efforts *doris slocum, t. earle johnson, jr.* **73**

Contrary to the claims of some practitioners, public relations efforts can be evaluated—as witness the variety of methods illustrated here.

PR: it's everyone's job *louis w. bender* **85**

Too often institutions have a myopic view of their public relations program, focusing only on the PR officer and only on the local scene.

sources and information *elizabeth rinnander* **91**

Additional materials on community college public relations are available from a variety of sources, as these references from the ERIC Clearinghouse for Junior Colleges show.

index **99**

editors' notes

The popularity and acceptance enjoyed by the community college from the mid 1960s seems to have waned in recent years. Local bond issues sought by community college districts have gone down to defeat. State legislatures have reduced appropriations considerably from the levels which administrators have declared essential if the community college is to fulfill its mission and serve the various publics seeking its services. Students who typically could be expected to seek postsecondary education at the two-year college have turned to proprietary schools or even chosen not to pursue a higher education at all in favor of menial jobs, travel, or unemployment. Community services and other educational programs of the community colleges have been duplicated by baccalaureate institutions, community agencies, and other "competition." As a result of all these changes, many observers are calling on the community college to reexamine itself from the perspective of the taxpayer and especially from the viewpoint of the legislator.

The importance of good public relations therefore is obvious. This issue of *New Directions for Community Colleges* treats a broad spectrum of ideas and practices that should enable colleges to reassess, where necessary, and develop, where needed, strategies for relating to the public through formal and informal programs.

Each of these quarterly sourcebooks is addressed to a primary audience of practitioners and to a larger secondary audience of those who work in or for the two-year institutions and therefore indirectly are involved as well. This broad readership is especially appropriate for the present issue, because one of our present basic assumptions is that everyone in the community college is responsible for communicating with the public. The image and character of the institution are reflected as much in the attitude and effort of the custodian or clerk as in the attitude and effort of the faculty member or administrator. Furthermore, trustees and citizen members of advisory committees may well find ideas in the articles that will help them promote the welfare and development of the college.

Notwithstanding the fact that public relations is everyone's job, the president clearly sets the tone and direction, as both Harper and Wygal observe. These contributors also point out the professionalism needed in developing institutional programs for relating to the public.

Other ways to use resources in carrying out the public relations

program are described by Keim, who advocates enlisting the aid of community agencies in establishing a community-based program for those clients who traditionally have not been served by collegiate institutions.

An essential aspect of such programs is designing a diversity of approaches that will gain the attention and understanding of the special populations within the service area of each college. Eitzen describes the efforts of one Arizona college to work with community agencies in identifying and then communicating with the various publics in its area.

Public service announcements are effective ways of communicating. Richmond not only identifies some of the media which provide free time or space but also outlines the most appropriate format for the institutional message.

The legal side of public relations is discussed in the articles by Elosser and Nash. The first shows how the consumer movement has increased concern for students' rights, especially the right to accurate information with which to make choices. Nash outlines procedures for dealing with federal civil rights laws, the possibility of libel suits against the institution or the practitioner, and related matters.

Concern for accountability in relating with the public is treated by Boyles, who reports the opinions and views of selected state legislators toward community college public relations. Slocum and Johnson outline procedures for evaluating the PR program within the institution.

The article by Bender not only emphasizes the point that public relations is everyone's job but stresses that the institution must view itself as part of the larger state system and be concerned with national as well as local events and developments.

The contributors to this sourcebook are all successful practitioners who share their insights and offer suggestions that should be of great assistance to those who are carrying out public relations, whether through organized programs or in informal ways. To help the reader gain perspective, we have arranged the articles in a sequence from specific to general, from the establishment of a formal public relations program to state and national interactions. In between, the authors have sought to incorporate the "how to" in each of their articles.

The editors are especially grateful to Billy O. Boyles, 1976–77 chairman of the National Council on Community Relations of the American Association of Community and Junior Colleges, for his helpful advice during this project.

Louis W. Bender
Benjamin R. Wygal
Issue Editors

Internal and external communication as well as development, should be included in a program that will bring about widespread understanding and support.

components of a model public relations program

william a. harper

The model public relations program reflects the institution's purpose, whether the institution is an independent private college, a community-based multicampus community college, or a technical institute. Its goal is to create among its various publics an understanding and appreciation of the mission of the college that will result in ongoing commitment and support. The ways and means of this objective may differ somewhat from institution to institution, place to place, but the goal remains the same. If an institution's program and purposes are not well understood, then there is little likelihood that it will be appreciated. Without appreciation, there is little hope for necessary sustenance.

There are various kinds and levels of support that may be desired, depending on the needs of a particular institution. For some private colleges, one of the greatest needs is to keep classrooms and dormitories filled, for a major share of their support comes from tuitions and fees. Yet those same colleges share with others a concern for obtaining gifts from alumni and other citizens as well as grants from foundations and corporations. For local community-based public institutions, a greater emphasis must be placed on creating an environment

of understanding and appreciation that will show up when citizens go to the polls to vote for assisting the institution or that will have an impact on a distant state legislature considering education bills. But the community college, or the public technical institute, will also be interested in private support and in maintaining strong ties to alumni.

These comments may suggest that postsecondary education has become a crass, commercially tainted enterprise (in outlook), concerned more with dollars than with people. But without the necessary dollars, whether from tuitions, private contributions, or governmental appropriations, people cannot be served. And regardless of whether the funds are there, the institutions cannot perform satisfactorily if citizens do not come to them, do not take advantage of what they have to offer. And without proper recognition, the colleges and technical institutes will not attract the kinds of staff and faculty members who will ensure that quality learning opportunities are provided.

The foregoing may also seem to imply that the model for public relations will require a battery of fund-raisers to lobby legislators, write proposals, recruit tuition-paying students, and camp on the doorsteps of corporations and foundations. Some of those activities will have to take place, of course. But, going back to the original definition, what is called for is the creation of a climate of understanding and appreciation that will lead to necessary support.

That means communications. It involves everyone in the institution. It requires planning, management, and personnel who will use a variety of tools and resources to provide information for citizens who must make choices regarding those things which they believe are important to their own well-being.

It is very easy to get caught up in conflicting terminology when discussing "public relations," whether in the commercial world, government, or education. Probably *public relations* should be considered the generic term from which various other hybrid names for the calling grew. Take your pick: advancement, college relations, community relations, public affairs. These tend to be the umbrella terms under which fall more specific functions, such as development (fund-raising), communications or public information, press relations, alumni affairs, corporate relations, and perhaps government relations. Most intitutions will not have separate offices for all these activities, but they are essential functions in the model program. And they all can be subsumed under the old-fashioned label of public relations, which I will use here. Those who feel more comfortable with one of the other terms may want to make substitutions.

Whatever the language used, it is translating the terms into action, into a good program, that counts. In the model proposed here, the necessary action is divided into three parts: internal communications, external communications, development. Each depends on the other for success, and an effective public relations program likewise depends on the proper integration of the three.

internal communications

The first line of offense in the public relations campaign consists of the immediate college family. Classified and professional staff members often are the public's chief contacts in their home neighborhoods, as well as the first contacts on the campus. An abrupt response to a telephone caller by a secretary or a receptionist, an administrator who is isolated from the public, a faculty member who lacks any feeling for the purpose of the college, can hinder substantially the advancement of the institution and thus present a challenge for public relations. Of course, the students are the real representatives, the products of the college. What they say about the institution in public probably has the greatest effect on general perceptions. Therefore, a major aim of the model public relations program should be to secure this first line of offense. Here are some approaches:

1. Make certain that board members, faculty and staff members, and students are thoroughly acquainted with the purposes and programs of the institution through orientation sessions at least twice yearly (perhaps separate sessions for each group would be appropriate).

2. Provide each staff and faculty member with a desk book or manual that outlines concisely the goals and programs of the college. The publication should indicate how various kinds of personnel—and students—contribute to the success of the institution.

3. Publish a college-wide "family" newsletter which keeps all staff members aware of new programs and activities. The publication should also dwell on the achievements of individual workers.

4. Dramatize activities and events over college-wide closed-circuit TV systems.

5. Produce a college-oriented motion picture for promoting the purpose and showing how people are involved in it.

6. Make certain that the president and other top administrators are not isolated from the rest of the family. Find opportunities for the president to meet informally with small groups. The participants might

represent a particular campus group or be a mixed group, depending on the situation or purpose.

7. Encourage student groups to use the mission, or various planks, as program material for meetings and other events.

8. Ask students to give advice on specific public relations problems. Provide mechanisms for them to register complaints and to make suggestions about college services and programs before these become issues.

9. Ask students to promote their college and provide materials with which they can do it.

10. Give board members information, through forms similar to those used to reach the staff, that will help them to interpret the college in their noncollege work and professional lives.

external communications

If the public relations office, working with other departments and the chief executive's office, has done an effective job in developing internal understanding and appreciation for the institution's purpose, the public relations effort stands a far better chance of success. But special skills, tools, and activities are required to take the message into the larger community. This rather large component of public relations responsibility can be delineated as follows.

Press Relations. Media attention is vital to creating public understanding. Thus, the model program will give substantial time and energy to cultivating the press. First and foremost, persons assigned to this aspect of public relations should know something about the information needs, the scheduling problems, and the interests of editors, writers, and broadcast directors. Personal contact should be developed and maintained. If rapport is professional but pleasant, the office will stand a better chance of getting the message into the medium.

There are several aspects to press relations. The press release is perhaps the most overworked tool, but that is because it has proved to be effective. In general, news releases should deal with new and important plans of the institution, board and executive actions affecting policy and thus the community, special events of interest to the community, and professional achievements of the faculty and staff. Obviously, there is good news and bad news. Although the public relations office is primarily concerned with disseminating "positive" news, it also is obliged to report honestly or provide information when some negative development occurs—a suit against the college, a student protest or complaint, a

firing of an executive or faculty member. Attempts to obscure the information or to be uncommunicative will do great damage to the public relations effort and thus to the institution in the long pull.

Perhaps more productive of public support are those releases dealing with the human-interest side of campus life—the professor who has invented some exciting new teaching device, the physically handicapped person who has matriculated against big odds, the research work of a faculty member which has turned up some important social trend. These kinds of stories abound on college campuses. And they tend usually to support the mission of the institution. Moreover, they often attract coverage outside the local community.

The public relations office should look for every opportunity to get representatives of the media on the campus. Writers and broadcasters generally tend to do a better job when they can gather information first-hand. Although the press conference is an obvious device, it should be used sparingly, only when the news or event is timely and should be made available simultaneously to all the media. The types of stories falling into this category include the establishment of a new campus, the selection of a new chief executive, the inauguration of a major capital gifts campaign.

Publications. Perhaps regrettably, a college or school cannot rely on the popular press to do the whole job of communications. There is so much competition for the public's attention that more direct tools must be used. Thus, publications that are made available directly to the consumer, or potential consumer, are a must for the effective public relations program. Moreover, although some publications may be issued from other departments of the institution, all should bear the stamp of the public relations expert. There should be some continuity in design and presentation that will help to convey an image that is consonant with the purpose of the institution.

All publications should be clearly and concisely written as well as attractively designed and illustrated if they are to compete with the many other materials that reach homes and offices each day.

Publications which may be prepared by other departments but should be reviewed and contributed to by the public relations staff include the catalogue, program brochures, and semester schedules. Ideally, however, even these materials should be the direct responsibility of the public relations office.

The objective public relations program also includes a number of publications activities intended primarily to advance the institution and its cause. Among these are a community newspaper, or at least a news-

letter, which keeps citizens posted on policy changes, program developments, new services, and the suggestions of other citizens; an annual report by the president and board, dwelling particularly on what taxpayers or other kinds of supporters received for their money; and occasional reports when needed on special programs or services. All are calculated to keep the public informed and to inculcate awareness and understanding.

In this era of audiovisual emphasis, the model public relations program should include audiovisuals for use in broadcasting the word. The motion picture is an old-fashioned but nonetheless powerful resource for dramatizing the story. A simple tape-slide system can also be effective. Multimedia presentations can be produced inexpensively for use before community groups.

Special Events. Most postsecondary institutions in pursuing their missions offer programs beyond formal classroom study or laboratory training. These include concerts, plays, town meetings, professional conferences, and athletic events. The public relations office should take some responsibility for scheduling and staging such events and should look on them also as media events. That is, the side benefits of press coverage should be exploited fully. Dedications, commencements, and other college ceremonies are also the direct responsibility of the public relations staff in the model program.

Speakers' Services. The talents and expertise of the faculty and staff should be utilized in the public relations effort to the extent possible. Faculty members should be encouraged to appear before community groups, not to promote the institution in this instance but to address topics on which they are especially knowledgeable. In doing so, they reflect before their audiences the quality of the institution which employs them. And, again, there is a side benefit: possible press coverage of their talks. The role of the public relations office is to screen requests for speakers, contact the faculty member who would best fit the bill, maintain a speakers' schedule, and make certain that announcements go out to the press.

The foregoing ingredients constitute a well-integrated external communications operation. For most institutions, press relations and publications services probably weigh more heavily in the total plan than do the other facets. But none should be neglected or overlooked.

development

My premise, as I stated earlier, is that fund raising can be effective only when the proper climate of understanding exists. Some students of

the subject would argue that development is completely separate from public relations, that it requires special skills and planning that only peripherally involve public relations per se. I contend however, that development is simply another dimension of the total public relations effort. Or advancement, if you will. For here again, the principal concern is with communications—making a case for support before the people, or before the foundation board, or before the state legislature. That's it. Pure and not so simple. The development component will be determined by institutional needs and aspirations. In general, however, the model program aims at constantly expanding the base and extent of financial support. Even publicly supported community colleges and technical institutes can no longer look to a major single source, such as the state or the local community. Plans of action or long-term campaigns will be directed not only to those usual sources but also to the private sector and contracted services. The following are some elements to be considered in the model.

Alumni Affairs. An appropriate starting point for many types of postsecondary institutions is with alumni. Although private colleges generally give alumni affairs more weight than public colleges, the latter overlook an important resource if they do not capitalize on those with loyalties to the institution.

The alumni effort includes soliciting money from them in any general campaign and asking them to help plan and develop fund-raising activities. A formally organized alumni association provides the machinery for action. It should be emphasized, particularly for public community colleges, that alumni support need not be considered as synonymous with direct giving. Support may instead take the form of volunteer assistance in a bond campaign or affirmations of college purposes and programs that encourage support from other sources.

Corporate and Foundation Relations. All postsecondary institutions must develop and maintain contact with corporations and philanthropic foundations if they are to reach their goals and broaden the base of support. The president, prominent board members, and other citizens should be asked to make some initial contacts, offering "opportunities" for the foundations and companies to support worthwhile projects. This work involves considerable research into the interests and concerns of potential givers and the preparation of concise and clearly defined proposals. For many community colleges, much of this activity takes place locally. Subsidiaries or plants of national firms should be cultivated not only for direct financial aid but for advice in programming, contracts for services, and donation of equipment.

Government Relations. With millions of dollars in direct aid, stu-

dent aid, and program support at stake, no institution can afford to overlook the federal pie. How it is cut in terms of an individual institution or a group of colleges depends largely on the amount of time and energy spent in "bird dogging" programs and appropriations. The model public relations plan gives special attention to this type of development.

Development Campaigns. The "how to" of such campaigns could well occupy a full chapter, but some discussion can be provided here. In a sense, the forward-moving institution is always engaged in fund raising, whether in the yearly effort to plan and justify a budget to be funded by the state or, in the case of a private institution, in recruiting the students that pay the all-important tuitions.

A special campaign, however, will be either a one-shot effort to pass a referendum or a long-term drive in the private sector to accomplish a particular goal (such as to fund a new faculty member or program) or raise a specific dollar amount for endowment or capital improvements. Such campaigns should be launched only after top administrators, board members, and prominent citizens have done considerable research. Once a decision has been made to go ahead, a professional fund-raising firm should be engaged to help lay out a feasible plan that has a good chance of success. The consultants will provide guidelines for staffing, scheduling the development of support materials, and the effective use of volunteer workers. Most of the public relations machinery recommended herein would be put into operation once the campaign is launched.

organization

To this point, discussion has centered on the functions and activities of a model public relations program. But who does the work? How are the functions organized and integrated in an orderly, productive fashion?

Organization is perhaps the key to integration. It calls for a team effort that takes into account all the functions to be performed and the resources available to carry them out. Each job is planned and viewed in terms of its impact on the whole. The public relations task readily lends itself to the management-by-objectives approach, since much of the work is built around deadlines.

The public relations office should be a separate department with direct ties to the office of the president. Whatever his or her title, the chief of public relations should be on an equal footing with other key

administrators. He or she should be involved in general planning and policy execution, since nearly all actions of an institution will have some impact on public perceptions.

Thus, the public relations director should advise the president as well as manage the myriad details of the program. The support staff should include at least a professional in development, a publications expert, and a publication information officer who would be primarily concerned with press relations, special events, and speakers' services.

In the case of a multicampus institution, each campus should have one person to carry out public information services. The work will be directed, coordinated, and integrated by the central office.

In summary, then, effective, formal public relations programs are vital to the health and well-being of educational institutions. In fact, they are an obligation, for no college, school, or institute can operate successfully and make its best contributions without public understanding.

William A. Harper, vice president for communications of the American Association of Community and Junior Colleges, is editor of the national Community and Junior College Journal. *He is also the author of a new book,* Community, Junior and Technical Colleges—a Public Relations Sourcebook.

Establishing the public relations component requires the personal involvement and direction of the chief executive.

public relations: concepts, authority, control

benjamin r. wygal

As the opening article has suggested, public relations is difficult to define. It isn't just something you can pull out of the bottom drawer, dust, off and look at—it is being practiced in the college all the time. Broadly speaking, it is people dealing with people; it is everything that the institution is and does. Therefore, public relations consists of feeling, attitude, motivation, philosophy, interpretation, and more. It also requires constant attention, for one discourteous switchboard operator, one uptight dean, one callous professor can undo in an instant what the college may have spent years building up.

A simple definition of public relations that I especially like is "being good and getting credit for it." To "be good," the college must first provide something valuable and meaningful to the community. This goal can only be accomplished through a well-coordinated team effort by every employee of the college. Then, the college must use the expertise of its formal public relations organization to tell the community who or what is to receive credit—and finally support— for an activity.

Public relations is more than just disseminating information to media or "selling" the institution to the public. It's not as simple as one chief executive of my acquaintance put it: "We don't need public re-

lations around here; if the news media need information, they can come ask us." Many colleges miss the whole point of public relations by limiting this important activity to "news and information" or relegating it to part-time status by assigning public relations to an already overworked professor or student publications advisor.

Simply put, all colleges have public relations whether they recognize it or like it. The quality of those relations depends on the college's approach to its communications with its publics.

dissemination concepts

The college's approach to public relations is largely characterized by the way information is disseminated. The chief executive referred to earlier was interested only in a "response" type of dissemination. He thought of the public relations function as being completely carried out when one simply answers questions from the news media or other inquirers. The opposite strategy and the one I subscribe to, is "initiation" —the majority of contacts with the news media and others are initiated by the college.

Dissemination may further be described as either "random" or "interpretive." One is using the random approach when one provides topical information, whether hard news, soft news, or feature material. The information might be about a program that is interesting today or some "hot" issue on campus. The purpose of the interpretive approach, on the other hand, is to build an accurate image of the college in the mind of the community member or "customer." To achieve this aim, the college must make a long-term, well-planned effort in which the "newsy" or topical elements play a supportive role. The overall intent must be to present to the public a "whole" concept of the community college.

I am sure it is clear that a purely "responsive" form of public relations can only disseminate information randomly, whereas a program of initiation is basically interpretive, using random information to support its overarching goals.

The simple paradigm illustrated below shows these basic dimensions of the philosophy or character of the approach of the community college public relations program.

DISSEMINATION MODEL



The closer a president and his public relations staff come to the initiation-interpretive approach, the more effective their program will be. More segments of the community will be informed about the college, more interest will be aroused among potential students, and, in general, the community and students will have a better rounded, deeper idea of what the college is all about. In essence, the college will come much closer to assuring that all its facets are presented.

The basic mission of the public relations program, then, is to provide information and interpretation—by means of the most appropriate and effective communications tools and media—to the members of the campus community as well as to the college's external constituencies.

organizing

Organizing for public relations is just as important as having sound operational guidelines for anything else the college does. So, where is the authority for such an enterprise? The chief executive must set the pattern. Since the authority for the daily operation of the college is delegated by the governing board to the chief executive, the responsibility and accountability for everything that happens in the institution ultimately rest on his or her shoulders. She or he is always expected to relate to the student body and to potential students—who include almost everyone in the community. Nearly all job descriptions of chief executives of two-year colleges include such words as "relating to and interpreting the college to the community." Boards of trustees regularly regard this as a very important function of the chief executive. Since the task of public relations is inescapable, who shall perform it?

Although in a sense every employee "reports" to the president, it is obviously impractical for all to be directly responsible to him/her. However, I cannot emphasize strongly enough that the public relations officer must report directly to the president because they must be in close communication if the function is to be carried out effectively. In fact, the officer should be a member of the top management team and participate in administrative, planning, and policy discussions. Only in this way can the person be well-informed and perform successfully.

Notwithstanding this close relationship, no college president should attempt the nuts and bolts of public relations personally unless that is basically all he/she plans to do. If the college budget cannot support public relations as a separate component, it should be assigned as a specific addition to an existing staff member's job.

The chief executive should be involved in defining the mission of

the program, and should approve the final goal statement. If the college doesn't have a competent public relations person to give specific advice, an educational public relations consultant should be employed to assist in setting goals and objectives and refining the mission statement. This provides general guidelines by which the department will function.

What to build into the program—staffing, radio studio, television cameras, reproduction and printing services, photography equipment, or just one person with typewriter and tape recorder—will depend on a basic analysis of the community, which should reveal the best ways to reach all constituent groups. For example, some colleges have used public service time on radio very successfully. If radio is a central element in the college's public relations program, then a production-type studio is necessary and practical. But that is only one possibility.

Any college that is trying to make decisions on communications and public relations tools and processes would do well to contact the National Council for Community Relations, an affiliated council of the American Association of Community and Junior Colleges (Office of Vice-President for Communications, AACJC, One Dupont Circle, Washington, D. C. 20036). This council can provide a great deal of help in terms of consultation and information on what has worked for others. The Council for Advancement and Support of Education (CASE), which was created in 1974 through a merger of the American Alumni Council and the American College Public Relations Association, is another source for institutional relations/information services. CASE is also located at One Dupont Circle.

How much should be spent on public relations? Such programs can be costly or not, depending on their scope and efficiency. What percentage of the operating budget should go into public relations? Again, that can vary. It depends on the size of the institution and what it wants to achieve with a public relations program.

For example, Florida Junior College at Jacksonville, with a head-count enrollment of more than seventy thousand annually, has six full-time people in the Office of Information Services, the public relations component. The 1976/77 budget for that office was about $169,000, which covered salaries, preparation of the college catalog, a professional radio recording studio, a news service, publications preparation for all campuses, paid advertising, and funds for travel to participate in professional activities. (The figure quoted is approximately seven tenths of 1 percent of the annual operating budget of $24 million.) While undertaking many traditional—and some not so traditional—public relations activities, the office emphasizes media relations. In addition to this

office, the president has a special assistant who reports directly to him and who is responsible for "community relations," especially in the business, industrial, and professional sectors. And of course many other individuals in the college contribute to public relations, too, either directly or indirectly. Among them are those who manage the Speakers Bureau and audio visual services.

control

Like the organizational step, operation and control begin with the college president and the governing board. When I use the term *control,* I am not talking about a limiting or censoring activity, but a careful attention to operation and coordination. The president and board cannot escape the "buck stops here" accountability for what happens in the program.

A case in point is in Florida. As implied by Florida law, the president of a college or university is responsible for all publications and anything else that is released to the media or public as information. In fact, newsletters or newspapers put out by the institution or the student body are officially *published* by the president. He or she cannot escape the responsibility.

To reiterate, that interpretation places the control of public relations where it should be—on the shoulders of the president—so any newspaper ads, program brochures, student newspapers, catalogs, newsletters, press releases, radio and television spots are the basic publishing responsibility of the president.

At Florida Junior College at Jacksonville the policies adopted by the district board of trustees specifically designate the Office of Information Services and Publications as the agent for the president, and all materials released for public consumption must be channeled through that office for approval. The policy is designed to guarantee quality, to eliminate duplication, to ensure that the public relations office is aware of everything that is going out to the public, and to provide a smooth channel for the flow of information. Again, the policy does not imply censorship or limitation. It is a policy that has worked quite well, especially in light of the complexity of the college and its many staff members and students.

The public relations office plays an essential role in building relationships with the various news media. The president of the college and those with the authority and control must become "real" and "accessible" to all media, and the PR office can help them do this. At the same

time, the office plays a vital part in helping the president understand how the news media work by interpreting some of the basic positions and attitudes of the media and their representatives. The president, and other college spokespersons, must also keep the public relations office informed about all "hard" news and what they have released to the media. It is poor policy for the public relations people to get their first knowledge of a major event via newspaper, radio, or television—or even from a media representative calling for more information on a news "tip."

The following briefly stated procedures are suggested to the chief executive as a help in maintaining good relations with the public relations office:

1. For fast-breaking, immediate news, simply phone the public relations office, and follow that up by a written memorandum, either detailing the story or giving the salient facts and the name of the source from whom additional, fill-in facts can be obtained.

2. For the future event—two or more days ahead—give the public relations office a memorandum detailing the facts, and, again, tell them where to get more information if they need it.

3. Make sure the entire college family understands your policy on releasing news so that if an event removed from your office occurs, the person or persons concerned know what steps to take, whether to call the president's office or the public relations office.

By following these three simple procedures, a potentially large amount of trouble can be avoided. Just be sure all the appropriate people understand their roles in any given news situation.

Now, the big question—who can release information, and under what circumstances? What about unauthorized releases from dissidents within the college?

The president and the public relations office must have good public relations and effective communications within the institution. The public relations function must be well understood by everyone and the basic operating procedures disseminated and followed. The chief public relations officer should distribute a memorandum to all faculty and administrative staff emphasizing the importance of keeping his/her office informed of what's going on and giving assurance that news and feature material will be released to the media in the most appropriate manner.

Any college employee with a news item cleared through his/her supervisor should feel free to pick up the phone and let the public relations office know what's happening. A quick typed or handwritten

memo is even better if time permits. Dissidents will speak on their own initiative, and the president will probably be given or will seek an opportunity to respond. Potentially embarrassing situations resulting from interpretation of issues can be avoided by a phone call or a memo from the president to the public relations person, saying: "Our position on this issue is. . . ." The public relations officer will take it from there. This strategy should be followed as soon as an issue becomes an issue, or in advance, if the president can see it coming.

Another matter is how to deal with public relations for the multicampus or multiunit college. In this case, control as well as authority take on new dimensions which need coordination. At what levels, where and when, can information be released; who speaks for whom, and at what level?

Control of news dissemination within the multicollege district probably should rest with the unit head, while overall authority is retained by the chief executive, who reports directly to the governing board for the entire system.

A note of caution—in the single college with several campuses, it is very important for the individual campus heads to have excellent communications with the public relations officer so that this person sees the whole picture. He or she can then handle public relations for all campuses and act as a channel for all news.

summary

And now, we must put it all into perspective. Just as public relations, or community relations, is essential to the success of business and industry, it is likewise essential to the community college. After all, the college is a kind of product that must be sold and that depends on repeat business, on continued enrollment in programs. Of course, many programs should be phased out, and many probably should never be started at all, but success still requires continued customer support. Products can be sold which are inferior, and there will be many first-time customers. But for a quality product to continue to be sold to former clients, as well as to new clients, it must first have substance, and then it must be presented in the appropriate way.

A community college exists to serve students. So do you measure your public relations success solely by enrollment? Hardly. Measurement must include such other factors as community acceptance and support, good follow-up reports from former students, increasing legislative support, the morale within the college family, media respect and

cooperation, referral of prospective students by former students, and the cooperation of other college departments with the public relations office. And, finally, do the gas station attendants know the college well enough to direct persons to the campus or campuses?

Is public relations simply selling? That's an important part of it. But public relations is also that feeling, that interpretation, that philosophy which a community college exudes when carrying out its basic functions.

Benjamin R. Wygal, president of Florida Junior College at Jacksonville, is active nationally as a writer and speaker in the community-based community college movement and serves as a member of the board of directors of the American Association of Community and Junior Colleges. He is a co-author of College Leadership for Community Renewal: Beyond Community-Based Education.

Specific steps need to be taken with the community in marketing community-based community college programs.

planning PR for a community-based program

william a. keim

In the past, the term *public relations* has had onerous connotations for the average administrator of a publicly supported community college. Visions of Madison Avenue and sales records based on stimulus-response techniques have come to our minds, and we have been constantly reminded by most state laws that we may not expend public funds to advertise our product. Consequently, some of us learned a long time ago to call our effort the office of public information. Besides, for many years advertising seemed unnecessary: our open-door philosophy seemed sufficient to attract the required number of students to our enrollment-driven enterprise.

But now we are in the late seventies and find ourselves faced with a new and potentially dangerous phenomenon, an enrollment plateau and, in many cases, an enrollment decline. Therefore, our first impulse is to step up our information services and to increase our budgets to include more general advertising in the media. This reaction is predictable, and since we are, as relative amateurs, working in an unfamiliar sales setting, we attempt to copy slick advertising methods to create a marketing response to what is essentially a social problem. There will be some success, but over the long haul simple advertising techniques will

not be sufficient, and if we plan a long-range campaign as though community college education were a bar of soap or a better mouthwash, we will surely fail.

We must follow the lead of the newly formed AACJC Council for Community Relations and regard ourselves, on the one hand, as an integral part of the community while on the other we explore realistic marketing devices to ensure a continuing productive role in that community. The process of integration we call public relations, or P.R., but to achieve it we must first really understand our community, and in particular we must understand the various agencies which drive it. Perhaps more importantly, we must make it possible for the community to understand us.

studying the service area

To understand our service area we must consider the standard dimensions—the social, economic, and political aspects—of any community, be it urban, suburban, or rural. The basic values and attitudes of the community should be examined seriously, because they are bound to affect the people's view of the college. Questions such as the following can spearhead that investigation.

1. Has there been community pride in educational achievement?

2. Are there strong religious elements at work? If so, what kinds of religions? (Some have more liberal attitudes toward public education than others.)

3. If you are serving more than one school district, municipality, or community, is there rivalry or competition among them?

4. What is the history of the area? Is it steeped in history? Does it see itself as historical? Are there public commemorative events to celebrate local history?

5. Are there strong union forces at work? Is there a tradition of the working class?

6. Are there strong local women's clubs and civic organizations? Have these been part of the history?

7. How does the community react to such value-laden contemporary issues as ecology, women's changing role, youth, and laws governing Sunday sales?

8. What is the history of the decision-making process in the service area?

The answers to these and other questions will supply the assessor with a broad view of the service area. Moreover, they will often dictate

strategies as well as timing. Some programmatic development should be embarked on slowly, and all planned change should be first analyzed for possible opposition before it is implemented. There will seldom be total approval of every activity, but an entire community college can be jeopardized if a single program that offends the standards of the community is put into motion.

Sources of Information. Where can the answers be obtained? The information is readily available but requires some reflection, and it may take a new person several weeks or months to gain a clear picture of all of the complex facets. The leading formal sources are the local newspapers, which are the one best means of understanding the community value system. The assessor should look for club and recreation activity and check to see how much space is allotted to education, church events, and new businesses. He or she should also check the activity of the Chamber of Commerce and other organizations, look for significant issues that reflect local standards (in editorials, for example), and examine the want ads for indicators of available job opportunities. Are they all minor or low-level jobs? Do they reflect, in any way, local industrial influence or consistent local standards? The local historical associations are another useful source. These usually keep public records of meetings and activities, sometimes in the local newspaper or library. And churches, local government records, and public libraries can be consulted too. Not to be overlooked are such informal sources as people in the community, neighbors, friends, and faculty and staff members.

Geography. Communities can be very difficult to serve if there are lakes, rivers, mountain ranges, and major highways which influence access and mobility. A quick study of these features can greatly influence intelligent planning for future expansion or off-campus offerings. For example, regionalism, determined by geography and often deeply rooted, can have a powerful effect. A river which now has a four-lane bridge over it may still be the "River" to the people on either side of it, and their response to programs on the other side should be understood. The same problem with mountain ranges is legendary. Even railroad tracks have commonly formed the boundaries between social classes. A more modern phenomenon to be considered is the highway, especially the bisecting interstate, which has spelled the doom of many an educational activity. In a sense, the interstates are the unfordable rivers of today. Knowing the traffic flows that are determined by highways or the lack of them will show the directions people travel during certain hours of the day. Population concentrations, too, are still largely determined by geography, and the location of new campuses or off-campus activities

can be suggested by a careful study of the effect of natural and geographical features.

Demographics. Standard demographic studies are also essential to understanding a service area. Information about ethnic groups, socioeconomic factors, educational levels, and so on should guide program development, whether these programs are designed for campuses or noncampus delivery systems. The objective of such studies is to identify previously unserved clients and to tailor programs to their needs.

The New Clientele. We are already familiar with the major categories of "new students": the physically handicapped; the economically and educationally disadvantaged; those with access problems; those with other special problems—dropouts, parolees, the aged; those who require special training in marketable skills; underchallenged women; and those with strong ethnic differences. In addition, each college has one or more special groups that are prominent in its region.

For the most part, these persons make up a fine clientele, generally ignored by the traditions of higher education and generally not taking advantage of the opportunities offered at the campus-based community college. Many are unaware of the chance to become a part of learning but, interestingly enough, could readily adapt to an individualized, competency-based style of teaching. In all fairness, many of our campus-based colleges do offer programs specifically designed for some of these special groups, and have offered them in the past with marked success. Yet these efforts have usually been designated as *special* programs, and few colleges today would identify them as a major thrust of their curriculum. As evidence of this, one would find most of them funded by external sources as special projects.

special PR problem

As we all recognize, one reason these clients have not been served is that they are difficult to reach. They have not responded to general information distributed by the traditional community college. Newspaper stories, brochures, high school orientation efforts, and announcements in the mass media have passed them by. Higher learning, as an alternative, has been perceived by this group as unobtainable, and efforts to interest them have been sporadic and relatively unsuccessful. Thus, the special-needs clientele, which in my judgment is the "break away" segment of our society, has remained educationally untouched by our network of campus-based community colleges. If we choose to examine the probable causes, we automatically enter into a phase of

public relations that is both exciting and solvable. First, large numbers of this population do not read newspapers and brochures and never appear on our coveted mailing lists. Many of them (the handicapped, the aged, the economically and educationally disadvantaged, for instance) never visit a bank, library, or supermarket, where we traditionally distribute and display posters and brochures. They seldom see an employees' bulletin board, nor do they receive a union newsletter. Their closest friends do not attend community colleges, and they long ago gave up the idea that postsecondary education was available to them.

Agency Role. How, then, can they be reached? A very effective means, as we have found at Pioneer Community College (Kansas City), is the special-interest organization or agency. It is clear that Americans have a strong impulse to organize themselves into interest groups. If we think about it, there is no aspect of our professional, community, or personal life that does not include opportunities to join others who share our interests. A simple count reveals to me, for example, that I "belong" to twelve organizations, ranging from the AACJC Council to historical associations and flying clubs. And I am not unique. In fact, *most* people belong to some organization or other, and almost all people, especially those in our new clientele, find themselves on some agency's list.

Handicapped Training Program. With this in mind, we sought the help of local agencies in identifying and reaching one client group, the handicapped. We discovered that the Pioneer service area contained eighty thousand handicapped people—obviously a substantial number of potential students. Consequently, during the past summer we secured a fully funded state and city grant to offer driver education and training in small business-machine repair, photography lab work, office skills, and graphics. Approximately eight agencies—including United Cerebal Palsy, The Rehabilitation Institute, and medical research centers—helped with recruitment, and within a few days we had our enrollment.

Perhaps the most significant characteristic of the agencies' participation was their constructive and helpful enthusiasm. The state project, because of its rules concerning the ages, economic backgrounds, and desegration of the students, prevented large enrollment, but the agencies were excited about the opportunity and were so cooperative that they not only provided special transportation but in some cases assigned therapists to accompany the students through the program. It was a very successful example of the college working *within* the community and demonstrates what we really mean by public relations in planning a community-based program. A new basis for continuing communications had been established.

Additional Techniques. Given that community agencies represent a primary means of developing a PR plan for community-based programs, we should still make maximum use of other marketing techniques. Remembering that our clientele is a difficult one to reach by simple advertising, we should concentrate on the following means of communication:

—*radio;* most people in the special-needs group listen to the radio.

—*agency bulletins,* in addition to personal contact; most agencies issue a newsletter to either their staff/volunteers or their clientele.

—*posters and signs,* near or attached to public transportation.

—*brochures,* judiciously placed in public counseling offices, employment offices, youth-group meeting rooms, retirement centers, *churches,* neighborhood council offices.

Most of the groups referred to above are pleased to use the community-based programs as a resource and are fully cooperative. Neighborhood committees and councils are the very best means to contact people on a block basis. And there are still many viable community-action organizations in existence, usually in urban areas. These are excellent contacts.

the future looks good

We have a product, and we know how to "manufacture" it and tell people about it. But in order to succeed with community-based programming, our plans and actions must be in the proper sequence. First, we must know our own product so well that we can explain it to people unfamiliar with the language of educators. Second, we must know our market (community). Third, we should use the marketplace itself to carry our message (agencies). And finally, we must grow and prosper, keeping our channels of communication with the community open in both directions—hear as well as listen.

In addition, we should be aware of competition from other educational institutions and be prepared for some academicians to attack the quality of our programs. Thus, the task of public relations, in part, is to show the critics that we are not in competition with expensive campus-based programs and that standards are not being lowered in our efforts to meet the needs of our unserved clientele.

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The Efforts of Phoenix College in Arizona illustrate how a college can establish successful communications with nontraditional students.

communication with special populations

maggie eitzen

The community college was not established in America for select or favored groups. To reach nontraditional students, we must provide new and different courses, ingenious techniques of teaching, and classes which go to the student, in addition to offering our traditional curriculum and methods of instruction. But before new student populations can enroll, they must be aware of the opportunities available to them; and communication with these groups is often a complex public relations problem.

Because little practical information is available on communicating with special populations, and because many nontraditional students are not reached through traditional public relations avenues, this article describes how one community college—Phoenix College (Arizona)—has tried, and often succeeded, in solving the problem.

Phoenix has managed to communicate successfully with racial and ethnic minorities, mature women, elderly or senior citizens, elementary school children, economically deprived persons, veterans, physically handicapped persons, parents with problems, adults in specific businesses or professions, and the general public as a mass. This success is the result of thoughtful planning, extra effort, and individual caring

on the part of administrators, teachers, and other staff members. As the contributors to this sourcebook have emphasized, public relations is the impact of *every* member of an institution on the various publics. Effective participation is required of everyone, because the specific client group must understand that they and the college have a mutual interest in meeting their educational needs.

In each case, the college located individual leaders and leadership organizations within the special target population. Because establishing credibility with the nontraditional group is most important, their representatives must have not only grass-roots respect, but also the respect of the total community and of the media. These leaders work with the college administration, the faculty, and formal advisory committees to develop programs for individual needs as well as help to plan and carry out the communications program. They are fundamental in making sure that the special population knows what the community college has to offer; they are the people who know where to go and whom to contact.

To communicate its messages effectively, Phoenix College makes use of minority and special-interest media and in some cases, uses nontraditional advertising on all-night disc-jockey radio programs. Students from among the special populations are involved in creating and sending the messages. Community leaders distribute notices to the employees of local concerns through flyers, posters, and internal publications; and, with college representatives, they also give talks to civic, business, social, and religious groups. Most effective is the word-of-mouth communication of the special-population leaders and other volunteers.

minority-group nurses

An example of successful communications with all local minority groups is the SIN (Success in Nursing) program at Phoenix College. SIN welcomes culturally different students who do not meet the admissions requirements of the nursing program but who want a career in nursing and possess the positive characteristics of interest, initiative, and motivation.

SIN is a three-year program having four phases: a prenursing orientation suited to the student's needs and interests, an introduction to community health care with emphasis on intercultural health needs, admission to Phoenix College in the two-year nursing program after successfully completing prenursing orientation, and a postgraduate

course to prepare the student for the state licensing examination and for nursing practice as a registered nurse.

College students in the nursing program visit area high schools, especially those with many minority students. Their efforts have aroused enough interest to fill the program. Thus, once again, involving the student body in semistructured word-of-mouth communication has been quite successful.

senior citizens

Because Phoenix is a retirement city, it has a large population of older people. TELOCA (To Enrich Lives of Community Adults) is a pilot program which was housed in the club room at Phoenix College until it outgrew the facility. This daycare center for senior citizens who do not need medical or nursing care, but who tire easily or have moderate disabilities and find other adult recreation centers too strenuous, solves a lot of problems for a lot of people. It cares for elderly relatives too enfeebled to be left alone all day while family members are at work. It relieves the minds of older adults who feel they're imposing on families who love each other but get cabin fever because they can't get time out for separate activities. At no time has color, race, ethnic origin, religion or creed, or ability to pay a full fee been a factor in acceptance into the center program.

Communication about TELOCA was done by special-population leaders and other community leaders. The three sponsors—Phoenix College, St. Joseph's Hospital, and the Foundation for Senior Adult Living, an affiliate of Catholic Charities—sought referrals from the Veterans Administration Hospital, the Visiting Nurse Service, Good Samaritan Rehabilitation Office, valley churches, and medical facilities. Interested community leaders spoke to special-interest groups, appeared on local television programs, and helped place feature stories in local newspapers and magazines.

Another program for this special population, an Elder Arts Festival, which was held on the campus this spring. The festival included an art exhibit and contest, a creative writing competition, and a performing arts show. All activities were judged, and awards and recognition were given to participants.

Communication with the public will be twofold. First, the coordinator of education programs for older americans for the Maricopa County Community College District will meet with advisory committees

and enlist their help. A key source of support is the Maricopa County Council of Senior Citizens, representing all groups in the area. This council produces and circulates a newsletter to this special population. Many other agencies for the aging will also work to promote the festival, and individual retirement communities and mobile home parks will be contacted.

The second form of communication with these older Americans will be their contact with the campus during their participation in the program. We have found that this kind of "contact" communication, which results from bringing nontraditional students to the college for programs that make them feel welcome and introduce them to some of the opportunities available to them, has been very effective. Some of the drawing cards have been special campus days sponsored by student groups, such as the Mecha-Chicano Awareness Day, the Klinapaha Indian Pow-Wow, and Black Bear Day sponsored by the Afro Club, and free lectures and forums for women at the Center for Women.

elementary and secondary students

Two other programs bring elementary school children onto the campus and thereby introduce them to the community college at an early age. These are the National Summer Youth Sports Program and remedial reading, math, and typing classes offered through the Phoenix College Reading Institute.

For the past eight years, three to four hundred preteens and teenagers from five inner-city project areas have spent part of their summer on the campus in a summer youth-program sponsored by the college and the National Collegiate Athletic Association. Youngsters of all races, colors, and creeds begin the day at Phoenix College with breakfast; later a federally subsudized, balanced lunch is served in the college cafeteria.

Girls have instruction in volleyball, softball, badminton, gymnastics, and dance. Boys participate in weight training, boxing, karate, basketball, wrestling, handball, track and field sports, and trampoline work. Both sexes enjoy a "good time" swim program every day, which includes some instruction. Drugs, careers, job placement, cultural awareness, hygiene, and other appropriate subjects are discussed during a daily educational component.

Extras in the program include a talent show in the college auditorium to which the public is invited, a day at "Big Surf," and a picnic

featuring a thousand hamburgers. There is a track meet and a basketball tournament complete with trophies, ribbons, and cash prizes.

Physical examinations are given to the youngsters before the program begins, and if ailments such as heart murmurs or dental problems are found, the youngsters are referred to local agencies for follow-up treatment.

Here again, invaluable communication goes on between these young people from poor areas of the city and dedicated and caring faculty and staff members, working with special-population and community leaders. Grade school principals in the inner city, City of Phoenix Public Housing Authority representatives, Leadership and Education for the Advancement of the People of Phoenix (LEAP) workers, community services agencies, and college staff members who go into the five low-income housing projects draw hundreds of boys and girls to the campus each year.

The success of the program for children with reading, math, or typing problems depends on contact with community agencies, visits with counselors, dedicated faculty speaking to community groups and taking part in learning disabilities seminars for adolescents, referrals from community agencies such as the Association for Children with Learning Disabilities, and most of all on word-of-mouth communication.

parents with problems

The most dramatic example of successful grass-roots communication methods is the Adult Family Living Program sponsored by the college's home economics department and the State Department of Vocational Education. Seventy parent education classes were taught during the 1975–76 year, with an enrollment of 1,520. Couples classes are taught in the evening so fathers can attend. A total of 880 persons attended special Fathers' Night activities.

The goal of the program is to educate parents for more effective family life. The role of the family within the community is emphasized. This is a preventive program in which college instructors skilled in group dynamics lead discussion classes geared to the needs of the participants.

The public relations work for the program is handled by volunteers, with a minimal amount of help from the college department of public information. The Valley-Wide Publicity Committee produces a

brochure, distributes it, provides information for news releases, appears with instructors and the coordinator on television, and contacts the media with unusual and newsworthy information for feature stories.

nursing home workers

Another successful, nontraditional program, which has drawn letters of inquiry from all over the country, is MIST (Mobile In-Service Training) for nursing home personnel. Many nursing homes and small hospitals feel a need to update the professional training of their nurses and other caregivers. New techniques and knowledge make continuing education essential. Unfortunately, however, most of these institutions have limited staffs and small budgets; hiring instructors or giving workers time off to attend outside classes is impractical.

MIST solves the problem. The college coordinator-instructor visits each nursing home or small hospital to explain the concept of an individual program suited to the priorities of the staff. She may suggest a class in the skills and capabilities needed to deliver quality care; in the development, organization, and management of programs of care; in rehabilitative nursing, food handling, housekeeping, patient activities, the human aspects of delivering care, or gerontological nursing. It often takes many hours and a return visit before the clients decide what they want to learn. And often, the program developed is so individual in nature, it may never again be presented to another group.

To publicize this program, the college submitted articles to such special-interest media as *Arizona Nurse* and the *American Journal of Nursing*, as well as sent information to medical editors of local newspapers, the local educational television public service editor, and the college district radio station. The traditional media also responded, but much of the real communication was done by enthusiastic college staff members, who persuaded the special population that the college was eager to, and could, meet their individual, nontraditional educational needs.

the handicapped and the poor

Special community service programs, such as Basic Sign Language and Sign Language for the Hearing, and consumer and homemaking classes given through the home economics department's "depressed-area project," such as Sewing for the Blind, are examples of nontraditional classes offered to help the handicapped. These persons are contacted by special-population leaders, such as vocational re-

habilitation groups, and by civic groups such as the Lions. However, once again, a great number of those enrolled in these projects heard of the programs by word-of-mouth.

Economically deprived persons are reached through an extensive depressed-area project sponsored by the college and the Arizona State Department of Vocational Education. Classes are offered as a result of requests and the expressed needs of agencies and the population to be served. However, lines of communication between the college and the special-population leaders or agencies must be kept open. A sponsoring agency within the community works cooperatively with Phoenix College to take care of the local needs of each group. Agencies are responsible for recruiting students.

general public

An example of successful communication with the public as a whole is demonstrated by the college's Home Arts and Crafts Program at Pioneer, a restored and reconstructed late-nineteenth-century Arizona town just north of Phoenix. Pioneer, recognized as a "classroom without walls" by many educators, is a living-history museum offering visitors a unique opportunity to experience first-hand the nearly forgotten daily activities of the pioneers. A college coordinator at the museum conducts classes, workshops, and demonstrations in pioneer arts. Through trips to this popular attraction last year, more than ninety-six thousand people, including thousands of children on educational trips, learned of nontraditional Phoenix College offerings through the coordinator at the museum.

These are some of the ways one community college has tried to solve the problems of communication with nontraditional students in nontraditional programs. The most important factor in its success has been *credible* communication. This believability was achieved, first, by contacting leadership organizations, respected leaders of the specific target populations, and community groups and specific leaders within them, second, by asking these leaders to serve on advisory committees and to help plan appropriate programs. Both steps must be taken before any message can be communicated effectively.

Then, unusual use of traditional media, use of minority and special-interest media, involving special-population students enrolled in the student body, distributing the message via the special-population leaders and other community leaders, and "open house" community

college programs for special populations are all effective communcation techniques.

But in all successful special population programs, Phoenix College has discovered that word-of-mouth communications are the most effective; and nontraditional programs so successful that the participants will be eager to go back to their friends and spread the message. It takes thoughtful planning, extra effort, and individual caring on the part of everyone involved.

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Colleges can promote their educational mission and programs through free public service coverage on radio and television.

tapping the "free" TV and radio market

james m. richmond

Getting the word out to citizens about community college programs and services is taking on new importance in a time of stabilizing student enrollments. The task is complicated at many institutions by limited funds for student recruitment and advertising campaigns. Yet community colleges can make better use of an effective and often "No cost" communication medium: public service programming on television and radio.

Such increased media coverage does not necessarily require a large public relations staff—just attention to the special format and needs of public affairs programming. Through the use of audiovisual equipment available in most college media centers today, public service spots of professional quality can be produced for immediate use by the electronic media.

Television and radio stations are regulated and subject to periodic license renewal by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC). Although the FCC does not dictate how much air time must be devoted to public affairs programming, the stations must operate in the "public interest." One of the best ways for these media to document such public interest at license-renewal time is to pull out programming log-

books and complimentary letters that show they regularly broadcast free public service announcements (PSA) for nonprofit organizations in the community.

How can a community college tap these sources of free publicity? The first step is to determine whether an institution's public relations staff is sending out PSAs on a regular basis. A bit of other institutional introspection is helpful:

—Has the college contacted public affairs directors at area radio and television stations to find out what their special requirements are for public service announcements and what public affairs programs seem suitable for college participation?

—Is the institution effectively utilizing available audiovisual equipment, such as cassette or reel-to-reel tape recorders, cameras that produce slides, 16mm movie cameras, and television production and videotaping facilities, to develop and distribute public service announcements?

—Are college administrators, faculty members, and trustees regularly scheduled to appear as guests on public affairs programs?

—Has the college drawn on the talents of journalism and communication students or volunteers in expanding its public affairs coverage?

If the answer to most of these questions is not yes, the college can benefit from greater television and radio publicity. The keystone is remembering that the two mediums have very different and demanding programming requirements and needs.

radio

Radio is the quickest, most economical, and most efficient tool for telling a community college's story to its public. Usually a college can garner free public service announcements without fear of a station's critical eye on whether the college has purchased commercials for other programs. Radio stations tend, however, to be much more cordial and cooperative in airing PSAs if the college also buys radio time as part of its regular advertising program.

The radio PSA is an excellent means of motivating people—prompting them to attend a college open house or cultural event, reminding them to enroll in college courses by a certain date or to take advantage of community service programs. (The radio PSA should *not* be used to announce staff promotions, trustee elections, or college opposition to energy cutbacks.)

Writing for Radio. An effective radio PSA concentrates on communicating *one basic idea* to the listener in no more than ten, twenty, or thirty seconds. Such a PSA may be either live (read directly on the air by the station announcer from copy provided by the community college) or recorded on tape by the college or the station.

Cuyahoga Community College (CCC), a three-campus system serving twenty-eight thousand students in Greater Cleveland, has used both approaches to radio PSAs. About fifteen PSA scripts are mailed to area radio stations each month. Each script is not more than thirty seconds long. All copy is timed according to a formula of two-and-one-half words per second. The copy should be typed so that each line is limited to a phrase or clause that can be read by the announcer in one breath. A common format is the following:

FROM: *(PSA LENGTH)*

Office of College Relations & Development
Cuyahoga Community College, 241-5966

FOR USE: June 1, ____ — June 15, ____

Public Service Announcement
Citizens sixty years of age or older
can enroll tuition-free in classes
at Cuyahoga Community College.
For information, call: two-four-
one-five-nine-six-six.

All radio scripts are mailed to stations at least two weeks before the college requires the coverage. In those cases where there is unusual need to have a PSA aired, the college's public relations office follows up with a call to the public service director at each area radio station. Cuyahoga Community College has also identified the local stations that will accept college-produced PSAs for transcription to the stations' tape-cartridge playback equipment.

Radio PSAs are produced in the college's educational media center, which has a sound studio and professional reel-to-reel recording equipment. A member of the college relations staff develops the script and narrates copy. For quality sound reproduction, reel-to-reel duplicate tapes are then made and delivered to area stations.

Equipment Needed. Sophisticated taping facilities and equipment are not required for a college to produce and distribute its own radio PSAs. For example, before completing its $20 million Penn Valley Community College campus in 1972, the Metropolitan Community Colleges system in Kansas City converted the basement of a red brick home on college property into a photography and sound studio. The studio was built by the staff and outfitted with only the simplest recording equipment. Nevertheless, the makeshift studio did provide the silence and privacy necessary for taping radio PSAs, as well as audio segments of television PSAs and college slide/sound presentations. No matter how sophisticated and convenient audio taping facilities may be, a college should ensure that area radio stations will use taped PSAs and that such tapes are tailored to the specific technical preferences of individual stations.

Many larger radio stations will also help a community college produce a series of PSAs that might focus on year-long community service courses or lectures. Stations can then make copies, at either nominal cost to the college or for free, that can be made available to other local stations. A college should not be afraid occasionally to ask for such special help.

Other Public Affairs Coverage In addition to using short PSAs, radio stations also schedule public affairs interviews and feature programs that range in length from a few minutes to several hours. A community college can contact public service directors to get the titles of talk shows, descriptions of formats, and the names of the persons responsible for securing guests.

To generate public affairs coverage, colleges can compile an "experts list" of staff members with experience and education in such fields as energy, the environment, economics, health sciences, and foreign affairs. The list should be made available to radio stations as a resource pool for both public affairs and news commentary.

Much as they do with PSA series, many stations will often agree to focus on a college project of major community importance through one or a series of public affairs programs.

Smaller radio stations often require that their limited staffs combine on-air announcing and public affairs and newsroom work with advertising sales responsibilities. With such a crunch of work, station personnel are frequently hard pressed to handle the coordination and planning necessary to fill public affairs time slots. To help them out, the college may offer to send regular public affairs program tapes. Stations

can be surveyed by letter or telephone to see whether they are interested; if they are, the college public relations office, a speech instructor, or even a student volunteer can often record and send several audition tapes containing interviews on college news, educational, and cultural activities. A weekly series can then be launched with just a borrowed cassette recorder, an interviewer, and a good college public affairs topic *that would interest the general community.*

television

Like their radio counterparts, all television stations devote considerable time to both public service announcements and public affairs programming. A college's existing audiovisual equipment can play an even more important role in the television medium, which naturally emphasizes sound, pictures, and the impact of motion and color.

Most large community colleges have the resources to at least occasionally submit PSAs to television outlets. Many have incorporated the regular production and distribution of television PSAs on specific college themes as part of their annual college relations program objectives.

Cuyahoga Community College produces two essential types of television PSAs. One or both of the formats are also within the equipment and production capability of almost all community colleges. "Live" television PSAs consist of written copy and 35mm slides. The other option is providing the station with 16mm film or videotape. In both formats, the visual and audio content must be of high quality.

Scripting for TV. CCC uses the script-and-slide mode primarily to promote upcoming college social and cultural activities and to spotlight specific types of services—senior citizens' programs, career development opportunities for women and minorities, and off-campus educational center offerings.

Television PSAs are usually ten, twenty, thirty, or sixty seconds in length. For maximum impact, copy-and-slide PSAs are never longer than thirty seconds. Because of the importance of motion on television, CCC always uses either videotape or film for thirty- and sixty-second spots. Whether the PSA is live or filmed, the script is prepared in the same manner as a radio announcement copy. Attention must be given to directly linking the slide content with the audio message. Following is an example of a television PSA script:

VIDEO:	*AUDIO:*
Slide No. 1 (CCC classroom scene—all ages, but foreground focus on older students)	You're never too old for college. And for those 60 years of age
Slide No. 2 (senior citizen, books in hand, smiling, walking up student center steps)	or older . . . there's no cost. . . at Cuyahoga Community College.
Slide No. 3 (CCC logo I.D. with phone number)	All it takes is a phone call.

A community college can develop PSAs with the copy-slide format easily and economically. The copy should be finalized first, and then special 35mm slides for the specific PSA should be taken by a member of the staff or a freelance photographer. Although many community colleges maintain slide libraries, it is almost always better to shoot new slides than to attempt matching existing slides with PSA copy.

The filmed or videotaped PSA at first thought might seem too demanding for many colleges' staff and expertise. In a sense, it should seem so, for television is an exacting medium. Most stations will not accept PSA film or videotape whose sound and visual content falls below normal telecast standards.

Nevertheless, a community college can begin with a $100, 16mm movie camera and relatively primitive audio facilities. Using a script for direction, a staff member or freelance photographer can film appropriate scenes. When lip synchronization is not required, the audio segment of the PSA can be narrated and taped on equipment available through most community colleges' educational media centers.

Camera-original film, audio tape, and script can then be sent to a commercial film and audio processing company, listed in the telephone directories of most medium and large cities, for film processing, editing, audio synchronizing, and transfer to a composite 16mm color film with magnetic or optical strip sound. Such firms will also add appropriate titles. The cost of this commercial work and extra composite prints is usually less than three hundred dollars for a thirty-second television PSA.

Colleges can sometimes employ an even less expensive method of production. As a special favor, some television stations will take edited 16mm film, title slides, and audio tape. Working with the PSA copy, stations can then use special equipment to integrate the various elements into a final videotape. Many stations will insist, however, on receiving the PSA in composite 16mm color film with strip sound. It is always best to provide stations with as close to finished products as possible.

Whatever the format used, a college should always contact local television public service directors regarding the concept for a PSA before producing or submitting it to stations. If a favorable response is received, the PSA can be developed and then delivered to station representatives. Personal contact with the stations, before and after production, helps ensure that the PSA meets their guidelines and that the spot will be used. In many cases, stations will agree to notify the college exactly when the PSA will be aired.

An example of what a relatively small community college can achieve in effective television PSA coverage is provided by Johnson County Community College (JCCC). Located in Overland Park, a suburb of Kansas City, JCCC has developed both copy-slide and film PSAs for television.

To promote its summer session, the college created an unusual PSA that required installing a 16mm camera, with an automatic time-lapse filming capability, on the roof of its tallest campus building. The camera recorded a panorama of outdoor activity: students driving into campus parking lots, walking across campus to class, visiting and studying on campus patios, and leaving the campus at twilight. The resulting television spot effectively conveyed the message that JCCC was a lively place indeed during the summer.

Cable Television's Potential This Kansas community college is also an example of how institutions can make better use of their own television studio. JCCC is one of only a handful of community colleges in the nation with a studio that is directly linked to a community cable television system. Today, the college produces and telecasts programs from its campus studio into eighteen thousand homes each evening. Yet long before the direct cable hookup was made, JCCC was producing programs in its studio and delivering videotapes to the cable television station for telecast to its home viewers.

Community colleges with a campus videotaping capability should check to see whether there are cable television stations in the area willing and equipped to accept college-produced programs. Commercial televi-

sion stations, however, cannot accept most videotape programs that have been filmed in college television facilities because the level of transmission quality dictated by the FCC is too high for colleges to reach. The stations must also use their own equipment to transfer copy-slide or film PSAs to videotape for later telecast.

Using Staff Resources Like radio stations, television outlets welcome good ideas for public affairs programs. Is there a faculty expert on the potential of solar energy? So, an assistant dean is an acknowledged authority on the implications of the Equal Rights Amendment. Unemployment is high, yet the college placement director has job offers for twice the number of students graduating in certain career fields.

The odds are a local television station has either regular public affairs programs or an immediate need to spotlight such staff members on a newscast. When a community college has a story or a news item that fits the format or current topic of a public affairs program, the college should aggressively present its ideas to the station's news or public affairs personnel.

When a college receives radio or television PSA coverage, a letter should be written thanking the station. These letters are filed with the Federal Communications Commission as proof that the station is meeting its public service commitment to the community.

Colleges interested in expanding their media coverage can draw on several industry publications for additional information on how to effectively get radio and television time. Two of the best such publications are available from the National Association of Broadcasters. For single, complimentary copies of *If You Want Air Time* and *So You're Going on TV*, write to the Public Relations Department, National Association of Broadcasters, 1771 "N" Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036.

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Institutions need to examine their public relations programs for misleading and inaccurate statements and develop specific ways to give students the information they need for making decisions.

the right of the student consumer to be better informed

bonnie elosser

In a historic message to Congress in 1962, President Kennedy declared that four basic consumer rights (the right to safety, the right to be informed, the right to choose, and the right to be heard) should form a framework for national policy making. In so saying he was both responding to and stimulating the consumer protection movement that has achieved such strength since then. In the field of education, in particular, the rapid growth of this movement caught many by surprise. Now, therefore, those responsible for public relations must work hard to ensure that their programs do not abridge the rights either of student consumers or of the great consumer at large, society.

Of all the ramifications of this movement in postsecondary education, none has been as far-reaching as the recent emphasis on the student's right not just to be informed but to be better informed. The initial mandate for better information came from the federal government and was primarily designed to protect the federal dollar supporting a wide array of federal programs. But while federal legislation provided the initial impetus, prodding colleges nationwide to take a good look at what they are telling the public, a number of non-

governmental agencies, consumer advocates, and student groups also recognized the importance of a better informed student consumer. And since their interest was not focused strictly on the abuse of federal programs, they have been able to deal with the broader implications of helping institutions become more responsive to the information needs of their students.

what is better information?

Do postsecondary educational institutions intend to cheat students? In most cases, the answer is no—not overtly. Yet students are being "cheated" if they are led to expect more from an institution than that institution can deliver. It is important to note that although many institutions sincerely believe that what they publish in their catalogues and other public information documents is accurate, many statements regarding what an education at a given institution can do for an individual cannot be determined to be either true or false. Rather, the material generally consists of undocumented and untested statements.

While those who provided public information in the past were not totally insensitive to the information needs of students, they were all too often motivated to send out glossy material that would, presumably, boost sagging enrollments. But since federal regulations and widespread voluntary efforts have pressured many institutions to strive to improve their public information programs, other colleges now recognize that if they do not take similar steps, they surely run the risk of being forced out of the highly competitive educational marketplace. Most educators have faced the fact that it is now time to act; the problem is that many simply do not know where to begin. In essence, now that most institutions are willing to devote the time and resources necessary to improve their programs, determining exactly what better information is has become a top priority.

This assessment is difficult mainly because the characteristics of better information largely depend on the unique nature of the institution providing the information. Nevertheless, the members of the National Task Force on Better Information for Student Choice, sponsored by the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education, agreed recently that better information, although it may be much more, has at least the following characteristics:

—It helps students become aware of the full spectrum of postsecondary opportunities and to realistically select those alternatives that are truly accessible.

—It is really pertinent to decision making, hence, it discloses the full costs of attendance, the chances of receiving financial assistance, program offerings, and likely changes in programs.

—It is not addressed to the "typical student," rather, it is presented in a variety of ways to different types of students. It spells out restrictions for certain students, such as transfers and educationally disadvantaged students.

—It is accurate, up to date, and representative of what normally occurs at the institution. High standards of accuracy and reliability must be maintained.

—It can be substantiated with data, or it lends itself to some form of verification. (Admissions and financial aid data, for example, can be summarized in graphs and charts.) Rhetorical statements and subjective judgments are not present.

—It is analytical and, if appropriate, critical. It includes candid assessments of the institution and its offerings.

—It describes probable student experiences. The attitudes and experiences of currently enrolled students can provide incoming students with an idea of what is likely to happen to them.

—It highlights the distinctive nature of the institution—emphasizing special features and the type of education offered. It contains specific statements about programs and student support services.

—It covers topics in detail. Explanations of procedures and requirements are focused and specific.

—It communicates effectively. The material is written for the intended audience. Although detailed, quantitative information is included, the presentation is still concise and easily understood.

the federal mandate

Although general suggestions are helpful, institutions seriously interested in improving their public information efforts will also have to become thoroughly acquainted with federal legislation in this area, since it dictates that certain information be disclosed. In addition, more recent measures provide the means whereby institutions can more easily undertake and participate in voluntary efforts.

As previously mentioned, consumer protection measures in education initially involved federal action designed to protect federal investments. The Guaranteed Student Loan Regulations, for example, require that institutions increase the information to students so that they will be more aware of the characteristics of an institution before they

enroll. The regulations state that for "courses of study the purpose of which is to prepare students for a particular vocation, trade, or career field," published information must include the percentage of recent graduates who have obtained positions in the fields for which they were prepared and their average starting salary. According to the guidelines, the institution may use regional or national data only if it cannot obtain meaningful data on its own graduates after making a good-faith effort.

Profit-making institutions have been under the jurisdiction of the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) for decades. In the May 15, 1975, Federal Register new requirements related to advertising, disclosure, cooling-off periods, and refunds were proposed for proprietary schools, which became eligible for federal student aid funds in the 1972 Higher Education Amendments. The subsequent guidelines for promotion and advertising were designed to thwart unfair methods of competition and deceptive acts that would victimize the consumer. College and university leaders were alerted to take notice of the widely publicized FTC requirements, which call for disclosure of such items as the number of students who fail to complete the program of training or studies, the actual number who graduate from an entering class, the number and percentage of enrollees who actually obtained employment, and the salary ranges of those employed. And, as expected, since these requirements were imposed on the proprietary sector, that sector has pressed for similar public disclosure by all educational institutions (Bender, 1975).

The 1976 Education Amendments are a culmination of federal attempts to regulate consumer protection. They contain a series of provisions designed to tighten up on institutional administration of the programs, protect the student consumer, and improve student information services. This most recent federal legislation focuses very specifically on the information aspect of consumer protection. Subpart 5 of Title IV authorizes a new Educational Information Program which will provide funds to the states on the basis of population, with a maximum of $50,000 to each state. States will be able to submit plans involving the use of grants or contracts with institutions of higher education and other organizations to set up "Educational Information Centers" that will be available to all residents of the state, within a reasonable distance from their homes. These Centers will provide information about postsecondary educational opportunities—program availability, admissions procedures, financial aid, guidance and counseling, and remedial or tutorial services.

The 1976 Education Amendments also contain a general provision for student information services. Institutions receiving any type of

federal student aid funds must carry out a program to disseminate information to students who inquire about financial aid. The new information must include what student assistance is available, how it is distributed, the means of application, the rights and responsibilities of students receiving aid, costs of attendance, refund policies, and the academic programs of the institution.

innovative approaches

Although the federal government has provided a great deal of direction, its efforts have been limited to a few areas, such as admissions and financial aid. Thus, leadership on other fronts has been given by other agencies. A review of several of their efforts may provide a more explicit idea of what an institution can do to improve its public information program.

In 1975 the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (part of the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare) awarded grants to sixteen postsecondary institutions and agencies to join in a national cooperative venture called National Project I: "Better Information for Student Choice." It encouraged postsecondary institutions to go beyond the problems of consumer abuse in an attempt to provide information that would facilitate a better match between students and the opportunities available to them. In addition to participating in the individual project activities, the project directors have been members of a national task force which has served as a common forum for further development and dissemination of useful strategies. The task force activities have been directed by the Education Commission of the States. (For more information, see *Consumer Protection. . .*, 1974.)

Four agencies were selected as resource agencies to provide analyses and examples of how comparable information about postsecondary institutions might be offered to prospective students. These agencies, working with a group of postsecondary institutions, attempted to compile information that would help students compare colleges in terms of such variables as the employability of graduates, costs, financial aids, the availability of specific learning resources, and the success and failure rates of their current students.

Eleven of the task force members, representing the diverse types of postsecondary institutions, have produced some type of prospectus for their institution which includes a variety of topics and approaches not typically found in educational information materials. Some examples include current regional and national data on the availability of jobs

in various career fields; accurate educational cost projections; descriptions and explanations of student attrition and retention rates; descriptions of the types of students who are most productive at the institution; current student and faculty perceptions of the quality of the learning processes and student-faculty interactions; the environment of the institution as viewed by various student subcultures; and assessments by graduates of the relationship between their educational experience and job requirements.

The November 14, 1976, *New York Times* described the completed Barat College prospectus and a similar document developed by the University of California at Irvine as startling for their candor and for the amount of hard data they contain. The Irvine prospectus was produced only after an extensive survey was conducted among current and prospective students and high school and community college counselors in order to gain a better understanding of the kinds of information these students consider essential in making decisions about their education. The forty-eight-page Irvine publication responds to the needs outlined in the survey through the use of two major components: a descriptive narrative concerned with UCI's academic programs and student life, and a variety of graphs, charts, and tables that highlight the text by illustrating specific statistical data about UCI, the nine campuses of the University of California system, and college students across the country. In many cases the data compare UCI to other major colleges or universities or to national norms.

In an attempt to portray the campus more accurately, UCI drew on a data bank assembled by using a variety of institutional research instruments. For example, the American Council on Education's Survey of Incoming Freshmen was utilized to develop profiles of entering students, including their demographic characteristics, educational and career expectations, and attitudes about society. Other survey instruments were employed to assess upperclass students' perceptions of such campus concerns as scholarship, faculty-student relationships, and campus morale, as well, as to measure the impact of college on students and to determine the financial aid requirements of enrolled students and how these needs are met (*Irvine World News*, Oct. 6, 1976).

The University of California at Los Angeles, taking a different approach, produced a unique publication entitled "Who goes? What's it like?" which did not come from the university administration or the admissions office. The preface states that the information "comes from students—from incoming freshmen characterizing their own back-

grounds, interests, and educational aspirations, and from upper-classmen characterizing the UCLA environment, based on their own experience at the University." The booklet answers such questions as Who goes to UCLA? Some people say that a lot of students from UCLA are from wealthy families; is that true? Is there a big difference in student activities and social life depending on whether or not you live on campus? What do students say about teaching and faculty-student relationships? Are there many students who are undecided about their major field or career? What are students' long-range goals?

Mountain Empire Community College, a small, rural community college with a high enrollment in occupational-technical courses, responded to the better-information challenge by surveying recent graduates and local employers and disclosing the following information: detailed job descriptions; entry-level salaries; average salaries and salary ranges after two years on the job; opportunities for advancement; minimum educational requirements for job entry; desired educational requirements for advancement; life styles on the job; long-range projections for continued and future employment; the mobility factor associated with certain jobs; local employers' attitudes toward in-service education, people with degrees versus people without degrees, and older people entering the job market; the history of unemployment periods; and the local, regional, and national job outlook by program.

Several resource agencies also developed new approaches. For example, the Associated Colleges of the Midwest provided comparable information regarding the employability, earnings, and career patterns of the graduates of their thirteen member colleges. The College Entrance Examination Board established a method for classifying and presenting comparable information on educational costs and financial aid for prospective students based on data from a diverse cross-section of postsecondary educational institutions. Syracuse University developed and presented comparable information regarding opportunities for individualized learning and the availability of career planning services at ten representative institutions. And finally, the Western Interstate Commission on Higher Education worked with five institutions to convert planning and management information into forms useful to prospective students.

These widely diversified projects, while very different in nature, are all similar in one respect—they all reflect the philosophy that individuals making decisions that will affect the rest of their lives are entitled to more than the federal law dictates. And although they received modest

grants ($25,000 maximum), most project directors are encouraging similar institutions to try appropriate techniques without the incentive of federal funds.

In an attempt to continue the progress made by National Project I, the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education awarded the Virginia State Council of Higher Education (also the 1202 Commission) a grant for a one-year project which is currently under way. Before the grant was awarded, the 1202 Commission had prepared a consumer-oriented directory of postsecondary educational opportunities in Virginia. Although this type of information helps prospective students become aware of what alternatives are truly accessible, it does not necessarily help them choose wisely. To promote "better" choices, the Commission recognized that prospective entrants need to know more about the probable consequences of attending and completing one program or institution relative to another. In its grant proposal, the Commission stated "that the need for such information increases as prospective students acquire more discretionary power via state and federal direct student aid programs."

Thus, the central questions for the Council's project are (1) What specific information demonstrably promises to help Virginia's prospective students make better choices? And (2) To what types of diverse postsecondary institutions is it feasible to make this information available, and how can this best be accomplished? The Commission will undertake a number of tasks in search of answers to these questions, and if they succeed, the answers should lead to a well-coordinated statewide "better information" effort which should also serve as a model for other agencies and institutions facing a similar challenge.

the future

A number of forces have prompted postsecondary institutions to develop mechanisms whereby they can gather and utilize more accurate, relevant, and useful information on a regular basis. The movement to provide better information for postsecondary students, however, has just begun. College administrators close to the situation know that improving public information programs is a long, tedious, and sometimes expensive affair. And gathering the better information is only the initial phase. The information must be integrated with the total public information program if it is to reach enough people to have a sizable impact. A college cannot publish pages of raw data; the data must be presented in such a way that they will reach and affect prospective students,

currently enrolled students, and the general public. Those who coordinate such efforts will also have to know how to relay the better information to the appropriate individuals in an appropriate format in a language which is meaningful to them.

Time alone will tell what turn the consumer movement in higher education will take and what ultimate effect it will have. But one thing is certain—institutions that accept federal dollars will be affected. These institutions have choices. They can become overly defensive, ignore or resist the regulations, and face serious audit exceptions. Some institutions will use stop-gap measures and simply comply with federal regulations designed to cope with abuse. The wisest, however, will face the fact that institutional negligence is at least partly responsible for consumer complaints and will seize upon the opportunity to do more for students than they have done in the past. The institutions that adopt a positive attitude toward the movement to protect and assist student consumers are likely to attract the students they are best equipped and designed to serve and will eventually be higher-quality institutions producing better-satisfied students with more promising futures.

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Laws and regulations affecting the public relations function must be adhered to if legal entanglement due to wrong words or pictures is to be avoided

will you be sued this year? the legal aspects of public relations

james n. nash, jr.

Informing the public, designing attractive publications, and maintaining an awareness of community needs and interests are important dimensions of the PR practitioner's job, but a new task, knowing the law and the concerns of federal regulatory agencies, seems to be developing into one of at least equal importance. The treatment given the topics discussed in this chapter, while by no means exhaustive, should serve as a guide to avoid pitfalls in the most common legal or regulatory matters.

civil rights compliance

A college or university may be philosophically committed to equal education and employment opportunities for all, but that commitment may not be apparent to outsiders because of some rather basic communication failures. The guidelines for civil rights compliance that follow, although they apply nationally, are based on a study of independently developed civil rights policy statements in use at Florida's twenty-eight community colleges and on the system-wide Florida compliance plan.

State Your Policy. Boldly and clearly state your institution's policy regarding civil rights and equal access/equal opportunity. Approaches that lend strength and prominence to your statement include placing it on the inside front cover of the policy statement; giving the name and office location of the person to whom complaints of alleged violations may be reported; using appropriate art or photography with the statement; charging all employees with the responsibility for promoting the policy and seeing that it is implemented, and reflecting that charge in the statement; and using clear, concise, positive language.

Some approaches which seem inappropriate to me include using a highly legalistic style of writing in the statement; burying the statement in inside pages; stating simply that the institution is in compliance, without further explanation; limiting the policy (in effect) by saying that it applies to "any program or activity receiving federal finartcial assistance." Finally, it seems questionable to include statements to the effect that the institution reserves the right to deny admission to anyone as long as it follows its stated admission procedures.

By the way, although the civil rights statements of various institutions may be worded very similarly, there is no official or required version.

Show Minorities. Make sure minorities are shown in all college publications, films, and slide programs, using the percentage of minorities in your enrollment area as the minimum percentage to be represented in photographs. Photographs should also depict special provisions made for the handicapped, such as ramps and elevators.

Avoid Stereotyping. Don't suggest through your photographs that nursing is for women only, engineering is for men only, and transfer programs are for whites only.

Encourage Coordination. The civil rights compliance officer and the public relations officer can help each other by coordinating their efforts. Compliance officers often fail to take advantage of the communications channels that are open to them. And although public relations practitioners supposedly have the best communications skills on campus, they are often unaware of what should be communicated because coordinated effort is lacking. Also, the PR person should be aware of public attitudes about and perceptions of the institution, and these should be communicated to the compliance officer.

Document Your Efforts. The progress made at your institution may be for naught if you are unable to show what you have done during review or visitation by authorities. Maintain a file of every scrap of evidence that shows your commitment to equal access/equal oppor-

tunity: mailing lists with minority representation, publications showing minorities and women, slide/tape or film scripts that indicate minority coverage, and the like.

Use Plain English. Where possible, simplify the wording of complex procedures that students must follow to enter the institution, apply for financial aid, or obtain other college services, such as exemption tests.

Orientation Sessions. Explain the institution's policy regarding equal access/equal opportunity during recruiting and orientation programs, using appropriate visual material where possible.

the Buckley Amendment

The Family Education Rights and Privacy Act, commonly called the Buckley Amendment, is one of the most complicated pieces of legislation ever passed. The Final Rule on Education Records, with its sixty-seven sections and five subparts, takes up six pages of small type in the *Federal Register.* To try to make its implementation easier, the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers put together a fifty-two-page guide. And Florida's Department of Education prepared a seventy-eight-page resource manual on student records, much of it devoted to the Buckley Amendment. Obviously, tons of paper and thousands of hours of discussion have been generated by the Amendment.

Fortunately for the public relations officer, however, only registrars and other custodians of student records must understand all its provisions thoroughly. The PR person must simply make sure that no news release contains the names of students who have requested that they receive no publicity. Under the provisions of the Act, every institution should have established procedures by which students may make this request. Usually, a list of students requesting no publicity is maintained, and it is this list which should be carefully checked before sending out the Dean's List, the graduation list, or any news or feature story containing a student's name.

Failure to comply can lead to termination of federal funds to the institution. Additionally, the authors of "Your School Records," an October 1975 publication of the Children's Defense Fund, point out that judges have held that "when Congress places conditions on federal funds, citizens affected by the legislation can go to court to enforce these conditions." They add that courts have already begun to rule in support of such action. Thus, the institution and/or the offending college officer

may be taken to court for failure to comply. That officer could easily be the PR practitioner.

Although the Dean's List, or a similar honorary list, is considered Directory Information and may be released to the media in the absence of a student's request not to appear on it, should public comparisons be made of students named to the list? For example, should we designate those who attained a perfect gradepoint average at the same time we release the full Dean's List? Should we designate honor graduates at the same time we release the graduation list?

Prudence and the spirit if not the letter of the law suggest that such comparisons be avoided. To announce that one student had a 4.0 GPA and another a 3.2 average should be as serious a matter as announcing that one student passed and another failed. The academic ranking of students should be a private matter. I am not suggesting that we eliminate public recognition of academic achievement, only that we avoid immediate and easily made comparisons. Colleges and universities which designate honor graduates or which publish multi-level achievement lists should simply allow a week or two to elapse between the release of lists that would be subject to immediate comparison.

In practice, we should point out, few students are bothering to ask for confidential status. At Tallahassee Community College, only twelve of nearly three thousand students have made the request, even after continuous and detailed publication of the policy. And many of those who have expressed interest in Buckley Amendment provisions have smiled and walked away when it was explained that "directory information" does not include information on grades.

your catalogue and the FTC

The emphasis on consumer protection and rights, the demand for more detailed product information, and the post-Watergate era of openness are among the factors which may, over the next few years, change the college or university catalogue into something totally different from what we know today. The nudge that makes a trend among a few colleges accepted practice for all may come from the Federal Trade Commission. Although preventing unfair or deceptive trade practices in the business sector is its stated function, it is entirely conceivable that the FTC may expand its role as consumer protector to include public and private colleges and universities as well. As Bender (1975) wrote, "While colleges and universities do not come under FTC regulations, the role of

the courts and the expectations of the consumer are changing and must be anticipated."

In his article, Bender listed six of the ten guidelines the FTC uses in policing proprietary, vocational, and home-study schools, suggesting that they might also be used in reviewing college and university activities if those already under scrutiny apply only a little pressure on the FTC. The six guidelines re violations are misrepresentation of the extent or nature of accreditation or approval; misrepresentation of faculty, facilities, and services; misrepresentation of enrollment qualifications or limitations; inadequate disclosure of fees and refund policies; inadequate disclosure of requirements for graduation; misleading statements about the employment or salary potential of graduates. In a content analysis of twenty randomly selected 1973–74 catalogues, Bender found at least one violation in each. All six regional accrediting associations had colleges whose catalogues contained violations.

Some specific suggestions come to mind as a result of Bender's study: State your accreditation status clearly and don't suggest that affiliations or institutional memberships are a form of accreditation; make sure all descriptive statements about the institution, programs, and faculty are verified; clearly and concisely state admission requirements; make sure the prospective or incoming student knows the total potential cost of attending your institution; make sure the prospective or incoming student knows what is expected of him or her in order to graduate; and be careful when discussing employment or salary potential.

All of this might well lead us to ask, should a college "tell all"? A volunteer effort aimed at improving the catalogue is now being made by eleven colleges and universities participating in the "Better Information for Student Choice" project described by Elosser in the preceding chapter. As she mentioned, one of the eleven is Barat College, a small liberal arts college for women located just north of Chicago. Instead of a catalog, Barat prints a prospectus, described on its cover "a new, experimental way of presenting the complete and accurate information you need to choose a college."

It is not an entirely glowing description of the school; its weaknesses are openly discussed. But Theodore J. Marchese, who wrote the prospectus, said that although there is clearly a risk in doing so, "the risk is taken with the confidence in Barat's strengths and with the expectation that those who do choose the college will do so with good reasons and commitment to Barat's goals."

The prospectus features thumbnail sketches of academic departments, their strengths and weaknesses; frank discussion of the chances of being admitted; five pages relating to costs and financial aid; student comments on the best- and least-liked features of Barat; and the frequently critical comments of accreditors.

On top of all this, the prospectus was "audited" by an outside committee which, while pointing out that many descriptions and statements "were not susceptible to verification," said the prospectus "presents fairly a description of the college."

There is much to learn from the Barat prospectus. The essentials are that catalogue copywriters should be frank; avoid "puffery," or exaggeration for promotional purposes; give more details, particularly about financial aid and admissions; write clearly, preferably in the second person, to which most readers easily relate; and document statements that may be subject to challenge.

Moving from potential federal regulation to regulation in fact, we find that the rules of the Guaranteed Student Loan Program, governing loans by state and private lenders to college and university students, require that prospective students be given information on their employment prospects and salary potential based on the record of previously enrolled students who graduated. Clearly, such a requirement demands that a follow-up program be in operation.

advertising

What could be wrong with encouraging students to attend a college or university? On the surface, nothing, but in the opinion of certain members of the Florida legislature in 1975, using paid advertising to encourage students to enroll was quite wrong. They saw advertising as a means of encouraging enrollment when it was felt there was not enough state money to support existing enrollment.

Consequently, a bill relating to advertising was debated by a house committee that year. Extremely restrictive in nature, it prohibited all advertising and, as some interpreted it, even brochures and printed materials other than the catalogue. The bill never reached the floor, but the clear legislative concern had been expressed, and practically all community college advertising ceased.

In response to this concern, some advertising guidelines were proposed by the Public Relations Commission of the Florida Association of Community Colleges and adopted by the Council of Presidents of

Florida's twenty-eight community colleges. The guidelines, which I helped to formulate, sought to discourage questionable expenditures and yet allow colleges to use a valuable information tool in a manner that would be acceptable to legislators.

For public relations practitioners in states that have no advertising controls or restrictions, some attention to the nature, content, and frequency of advertising and the circumstances in which the medium is used might be in order. The guidelines we developed, condensed here, should be valuable in such a review:

1. Informational activities, including advertising, should be conducted in the most economical manner possible. (If it is questionable to spend the money at all, it is even more so to spend it unwisely and without justification.)

2. Colleges should fully utilize free public service activities, that is, coverage which can be obtained through news releases, public service announcements, and guest appearances on radio and television talk shows.

3. Paid advertising should be restricted to practical or useful information: course listings; entrance requirements; costs; financial aid information; announcement of exhibits, conferences, and short courses. Advertising which is intended to enhance the image, prestige, or reputation of the college should be avoided.

4. Money should not be spent to retain advertising or public relations agencies to produce advertisements or printed materials. The PR practitioner, after all, possesses the expertise to handle such tasks.

5. Funds should not be used to purchase advertising specialities—matchbooks, ash trays, pencils, or other giveaways for promotional purposes.

As justification for advertising, the PR Commission cited the need to promote the concept of equal access/equal opportunity, the inadequacy of relying entirely on news releases and public service announcements, and the fact that, in the case of public institutions, those who provide most of the financial support—taxpayers—have a right to have information provided to them.

Finally, another factor to consider before advertising is the reaction your local radio and television stations might have to your placing paid ads in the newspaper. Under no circumstances should a coordinated campaign of paid ads in the newspaper and free public service announcements on radio and television, both promoting the same program or event, be attempted.

photography

Obtaining good campus photographs is one of the most important aspects of the public relations practitioner's job, adding, as it does, the visual element to the information program. However, improper photography too can lead to legal entanglements.

The photo release signed by the subject or subjects who appear in the photograph, although generally recognized as the legal device to avoid future court action, is not an absolute guarantee of protection. Still, it is the best device we have, and it should always be used in unusual photo situations—when your subjects are students who happen to be mental patients or prisoners (not an unusual occurrence in community colleges, of course), handicapped students, hospitalized persons (in poses with your nursing students, for example), students or visitors identified in photographs as being indigent, injured persons, or students involved in disciplinary hearings.

The more routine photograph, when certain guidelines are followed, poses considerably less danger, even without a photo release. These guidelines include refraining from the following: photographing a person who specifically says he does not wish to be photographed; using photographs of persons in any paid advertising done by the institution; using photographs which serve no educational or information purpose; using photographs which ridicule or embarrass because of the activities of the subject or as a result of unusual lens distortion; using photographs of couples in clearly romantic poses; using photographs of students who are not involved in what most persons would consider normal campus activities.

Under no circumstances should a college photographer trespass or invade the privacy of others to obtain a photograph. (Less than obvious invasion of privacy should also be avoided. A good example of this might be a situation in which students in a public area appear to have established their own private world.)

Should we obtain a release from every student we photograph? The legal advice I obtained in preparing this article holds that this may be unnecessary. If the photograph is of a normal campus scene, is newsworthy, or serves an education purpose, we are on fairly safe ground without a release, unless it falls into one of the sensitive areas described earlier. And as I suggested earlier, we should all follow a policy of refraining from photographing students who tell us they do not wish to be photographed.

Finally, care should be taken in captioning the photographs, for a seemingly innocuous image may become libelous if inappropriate words are chosen.

libel

Civil libel is the defamation of a person's character or reputation. It is a written statement that exposes a person to hatred, ridicule, or contempt. Though the nature of public relations precludes the likelihood of obvious libel, there are subtle ways to commit libel unintentionally.

A public relations practitioner may commit libel and not even know he has done so when the form of libel is libel *per quod*, or a statement which seems harmless enough on the surface but later proves to be defamatory. This is obviously more dangerous than libel *per se*, or a statement that is libelous on its face.

The classic case of libel *per quod* cited by lawyers is the 1902 case of *Morrison* v. *Ritchie and Company*. In that case, the defendant's newspaper published a report that the plaintiff had given birth to twins. There were readers, however, who knew the woman had only been married one month, and this was the special, extrinsic circumstance that made it libel *per quod*. In 1902, this was, indeed, a defamatory inference, and the words were held to be actionable.

A photograph too may be libelous if it holds a person up to ridicule or contempt, or it may become libelous when combined with a cutline, a headline, or a story. Other visual images, such as films or slides, also have libelous potential.

Is truth a defense against a charge of libel? In more than half the states, truth is a defense. The remaining states consider, in addition to truth, whether the public good is served by publication and whether malice is involved.

conclusion

The goal of the public relations practitioner should be to comply fully with all laws and regulations. Although there are no guarantees, our best chance of attaining this goal should come from taking great care in all that we do; keeping up, as best we can, with the literature of law and federal regulations; and adhering to what one attorney has called the "Rule of Reason." We should apply the test of reasonableness to all that

we do on the theory that reasonable action might not be legally challenged and, if challenged, would form the basis of a good defense when combined with other applicable points of the law.

A final point to remember is that new laws and regulations are being written and that new and old laws and regulations are subject to varying interpretation. Fortunately, these are usually well publicized, particularly new interpretations and "landmark" court decisions.

references

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College public relations people must establish clear images of themselves and their institutions in the minds of those who appropriate their funds.

views of the purse-string holders

billy o. boyles

The mission and philosophical base of the community college presuppose that the institution will use some of its financial resources to carry out the public relations functions of informing, interpreting, and defining so that members of the community will understand the college's role and its place in their lives. But more than that, the public is entitled to this service because it "owns" the college through its tax support. Therefore, it is important that those who appropriate and allocate funds for public education understand both the mission of the two-year college and the functions of public relations as practiced by this grass-roots type of educational institution.

The need to increase their understanding is especially acute now because for some time we took for granted their support. During the so-called golden years of higher education, public colleges and universities generally were adequately funded because education was then neither under fire nor under the close scrutiny that it is today. In that period, we took no special pains to inform the purse-string holders what our mission was; it wasn't felt all that necessary. Educational institutions did the obligatory things—furnished the reports, met with the appropriate legislative committees, and so on—and the funding came.

But, to state the obvious, it is no longer that way. The constituents paying the bills, the taxpayers, began questioning the value of higher

education; the consumers, the students, began questioning the relevance of higher education; and the legislators began wondering what the dollars bestowed on education were actually buying. Nevertheless, when the smoke began to settle a little, community colleges emerged with the most favored status because apparently we had been doing the best job with our funds and providing education at less cost per student to the taxpayer than the four-year institutions.

Still, we were not exempt from the questioning and the demand for accountability—in other words, the necessity to tell our story and establish our identity. It finally dawned on us that our legislators are a very special public and we really had not placed enough emphasis on informing them.

It is therefore incumbent on the colleges in each legislative district to do all in their power to define their institutional missions for those who represent them in the legislature. It is further incumbent on the public relations officer at each college to get to know the members of his or her own legislative delegation so that they, in turn, can know the officer and his/her role at the institution.

One legislator asked me a question which puts the roles of the college, the public relations person, and the purse-string holders into proper perspective: "How can we [the legislature] support your institution if we don't know what you're doing and how you're doing it? Actually, if we don't know you, how can we believe what you tell us? Too many PR types and lobbyists have tried to sell us a bill of goods. Whom can we believe?"

Legislators as a group distrust those with vested interests. But once an institution and its public relations representatives have demonstrated honesty and integrity, then that college is most likely to gain "favored" status with the legislators. This does not necessarily mean they'll support the institution, but it increases the likelihood that they'll at least listen. Being listened to is very important and is the only way public colleges, individually and collectively, will gain the legislative support absolutely essential to adequate funding.

how legislators regard PR

I interviewed two members of the Florida senate and four members of the Florida house of representatives to gain direct insight into how they regarded the public relations function of the community junior college. Is it essential or an unnecessary frill or somewhere in between? These legislators were selected because their attitudes were considered to be representative of those of other purse-string holders

nationwide. For some of those interviewed, the question evoked answers that go beyond the public relations question. Selected questions and responses from the interviews follow.

Senator Mattox Hair, Jacksonville, chairman of the Judiciary-Civil Committee and member of the Appropriations and Economic Committee and the Community and Consumer Affairs Committee:

Question: Senator Hair, do you feel the expenditure of state funds for the public relations purpose is justified?

Answer: Public relations in community colleges poses no problem for me. I think it's necessary. You've got to do a certain amount of public relations. You must keep the people who take your classes informed. Otherwise, how will they know what you're offering, when and where to register and so on?

Q: Do you feel paid advertising is justified?

A: Yes, I do, although I am well aware that a representative authored a bill a couple of years ago that would have stopped all paid advertising had it been passed. (Senator Hair was referring to Florida House Bill 833, which could have stopped all paid advertising, most publications, and certain parts of the college catalogue in all segments of higher education had it been passed, according to the interpretation I received. Fortunately, it never got out of committee.) I don't object to paid advertising, but I also think your satisfied student is the best advertising you can have.

Q: Senator Hair, do you have any idea about how much or what percentage of the college budget should be devoted to public relations?

A: I don't really know. It would seem to me the percentage would depend on the size of the school, its overall budget. Perhaps the larger the overall budget, the smaller the percentage for public relations.

Representative Richard S. "Dick" Hodes, Tampa, member of the Education and Health and the Rehabilitative Services committees:

Q: Representative Hodes, what do you perceive the role or function of public community junior college public relations to be?

A: It primarily tries to make college attractive for recruitment purposes, tries to reach the potential student. Its most visible effort should be to point out advantages of going to college to the public so the public can take advantage of the college. It should attempt to upgrade the community. Actually, it's a means of generating full-time equivalent [FTE] students, and FTE generates dollars. What your public relations program does not do well is to maintain a relationship with legislators, to show them the community college's relative importance to the commu-

nity. You must make the legislators aware of the existence of the colleges, of the resources they bring each community educationally and economically. You should present the public with the availability of programs, especially outreach programs. You're not reaching the people who need your college's services the most. They are people who don't read, people you can't reach through the media. These are people who need vocational skills or to upgrade their skills. Public relations is not reaching the public through paid advertising. You must try to reach the uneducated young. You're not going into their communities and pointing out to them their need for educational improvement.

Q: What limitations, if any, would you place on the public relations role of community junior colleges?

A: Some limitations on paid advertising, especially newspapers. Also on brochures. Brochures won't get to the correct target population. Ads won't either. I have no problems with the catalogue if it's informative and free of pictures of the president and so forth. It should be very factual and representative of courses actually taught. It should be done on cheap paper and be purely informational.

Q: Representative Hodes, you mentioned outreach as a part of public relations. Would you explain that, please.

A: Community college outreach is not satisfactory. You need to make use of other agencies, encouraging those people to be aware of programs you have for the economically and socially disadvantaged. You've got to get away from the concept of the community college as a place for transfer students only.

Q: Do you feel that Florida community colleges have done an adequate job individually and collectively of building an identity among their constituencies?

A: Yes. Community colleges have the best reputation among all educational institutions. The comunity college's most effective role is providing educational opportunities, whatever that opportunity might be. The community college has been in a salvaging role, reaching the low potential student.

Q: Would you sanction paid advertising?

A: As long as the ad is constructed to indicate that the target population is the culturally and educationally disadvantaged.

Senator Kenneth H. "Buddy" MacKay, Jr., Ocala, vice-chairman of the Commerce Committee and member of both the Education and Finance Committee and the Taxation and Claims Committee:

Q: Senator MacKay, how do you perceive the role of Florida's community colleges and their public relations programs?

A: I see community colleges as the thirteenth and fourteenth years of public school on the one hand and sources of specialized educational services on the other. It's that latter area that gives me trouble. With so many different types of institutions—universities, K through 12, vocational schools, and community colleges—offering, in a sense, similar programs in that very grey area known as community services, that's where the problems are. All of these overlap and duplicate these services, with each claiming the prerogative as its own, and each purchasing advertising, usually recruitment in nature, to lure the student into its classes. I can't agree with that as being a valid public relations function.

Ten years ago, I—neither did my colleagues—had no argument with community colleges' doing whatever they perceived as a valid educational service. The community colleges got anything they wanted. That's no longer true. It can't be. There's just so much money for all state functions, including education, and when it's gone, it's gone.

Take the 4100 [community instructional services] courses, for example. We gave Commissioner [Ralph] Turlington [cabinet member and head of the state's entire public education system] a set amount of dollars for community services. He was to allocate that money where it could be used in the most appropriate manner for the greatest good and get tangible results. We couldn't identify the needs in that area; he could, so we gave him discretionary powers over its allotment.

So far as the public relations function itself is concerned, I have no problems. It's a valid function. I support the community college's right to advertise or do whatever else is necessary to inform the community. What I don't support is advertising for community services unless that advertising is paid for by nonpublic monies.

I have a problem, too, in feeling that these so-called self-supporting courses may not really be that—that some costs are hidden in accounting procedures and paid for by public money, disclaimer notwithstanding. As long as *all* [emphasis the Senator's] the costs including overhead are paid by the students, then I'm ok with even that area. But it'll be a long time before we settle that [community services] issue.

Q: Senator MacKay, you've answered nearly all my questions without my asking them. One final question on the PR function. . .

A: I have no hang-up about the public relations function as long as that function is supportive of the educational mission of the college.

Representative Eric Smith, Jacksonville, member of the Criminal Justice Committee:

Q: Representative Smith, what is your perception of the role and function of public relations in Florida's community colleges?

A: To tell their stories. Nearly every day I read in the paper something about Florida Junior College at Jacksonville. And when I go other places where there are other colleges, I read about them, too. You ought to do that which is necessary to keep the community informed, whether it's news releases, advertising, radio, TV, or whatever. I get a lot from your [FJC] IS [Information Services] Newsletter. All those activities help.

Q: Representative Smith, someone has said it's the obligation and responsibility of the college to tell the community what it is doing, for the community owns the college and has a right to know. Do you agree with that statement?

A: Totally. They can't participate if they don't know.

Q: Would you place limitations on the public relations function?

A: No. Everything a college does is PR. Some activities in and of themselves generate good responses from the public toward the institution.

Q: Would you sanction paid advertising to ensure that the college provides essential information about equal access, equal opportunity?

A: Yes. Positively so.

Q: Should a community college spend public funds for paid advertising, whatever form that advertising might take and for whatever purpose?"

A: Yes. Advertising is helpful to the college in terms of directing people. You should spend some amount to let people know its role.

Q: Representative Smith, do you subscribe to the statement that each institution must do a certain amount of public relations to identify and interpret itself to its community?

A: Yes. Particularly in view of their nontraditional roles, such as [providing] remedial skills, occupational-vocational-technical programs, and so on. Community colleges are doing a good job.

Senator Jack D. Gordon, Miami, member of the Education, Health and Rehabilitative Services Committee and the Rules and Calendar Committee:

Q: Senator Gordon, do you feel that public relations is a necessary function of community colleges in the state?

A: Yes. There are twenty-eight schools, and the community ought to know what these colleges are. Public relations is also a guidance function of the high school.

Q: Do you feel community colleges have done an adequate job of interpreting themselves and building an identity among their constituencies?

A: Yes.

Q: Would you sanction paid advertising to ensure that the college provides essential information about equal access, equal opportunity?

A: As a last resort.

Q: What percentage of a community college's budget should be devoted to advertising?

A: Very small.

Representative Elaine Bloom, Miami, member of the Appropriations and Education committees (author's note: Representative Bloom was visiting the FJC Information Services Office for a radio interview and was on a tight schedule of other appointments; therefore only one question was asked:

Q: Representative Bloom, you are in the FJC recording studio, an example of the technology one college uses to tell its story. This is a two-part question—are Florida's community colleges accomplishing their missions and are they doing an adequate job of telling about it?

A: Yes to both questions. The community colleges are innovative, as witness FJC's Center for the Continuing Education of Women [at which she spoke earlier that day] and this radio actuality of me telling about it.

legislators give some tips

I have also talked informally with several other Florida senators and representatives. These discussions almost invariably got to this point: Keep us informed about your college, about specific activities and programs that you provide for your area; otherwise, we very possibly don't really know the specific thrusts and directions of your educational services and your needs for financial support. This also will help us establish a realistic identity for your college. We get a great deal of input, but what we and our offices really need is more contact with you—and your counterparts in all the other twenty-seven colleges in the state.

Still another point emerged in these talks—we should not concentrate only on friends in the legislature. We should talk to all legislators, inform those who are opposed; ask them to look at both sides of the situation.

Parenthetically, in many cases continuing contact with the leg-

islative aides is more productive than one-shot contacts with the legislators, and generally, the aides are more accessible. In short, we must get to know the aides and their bosses. As public relations people, we literally cannot afford to be naive about the legislative process; neither can we let ourselves be awed or threatened by its convolutions. We've got to tell the legislators about our colleges, and we should develop relationships with them that'll let us do this adequately.

conclusion

Florida's legislators, as this sampling reveals, generally agree that the public relations function in the community junior college is valid, although they don't necessarily agree on how it should be accomplished or what percentage of the college budget should be devoted to this effort. Most seem to feel, too, that the community must be kept informed about the college; only a very few believe it's up to the "people" to find out for themselves what they need and want to know about the college.

The major point emphasized over and over is that the public relations programs in general are not reaching the people who most need community junior colleges. We have effective ways to communicate with traditional students, but we have neglected the "new" students, the unreached, who, as Representative Hodes pointed out, may not even know they need us. These are people who don't read, who can't be reached through radio and television or even through advertising. Thus we must use unconventional means to inform and interest them.

The legislators also want to see community colleges establish better identities to help alleviate the public's confusing them with other types of institutions of higher education. They further want the colleges to keep the community informed so that citizens can take advantage of all the specific educational services in which they want to participate, as well as gain an overall picture of the college and the services it provides. Implied here too is the accountability factor. The purse-string holders want to know that the taxpayer is getting value for his investment.

Despite the strength of the legislators' views, however, my premise that they have imprecise perceptions of public relations proved to be correct. Perhaps more importantly, they have hazy conceptions of the mission of community junior colleges. These must obviously be clarified if the colleges are to get maximum support from the legislature.

Legislators want to be communicated with. Like the media serving community colleges, legislators look to the public relations staff of

each college for specific information. And since money for education will be even scarcer in the future, each community college must have adequate information programs for its constituencies, including the legislature—probably the most important constituent group of all.

Billy O. Boyles is associate director of information services and publications for Florida Junior College at Jacksonville. He was active in the American College Public Relations Association, now combined with the American Alumni Council into the Council for the Advancement and Support of Education. He also was chairman of the National Council for Community Relations in 1976/1977.

Contrary to the claims of some practitioners, public relations efforts can be evaluated.

assessing public relations efforts

doris slocum
t. earle johnson, jr.

The marketing of a college is very much like the marketing of any other product—it includes encouraging consumers to choose that product rather than doing without it or selecting a competitor. Today, our programs of encouragement must be more energetic and precise, because our traditional market has become more competitive. The number of "college-age" students has decreased, while the number of colleges increased. Thus, the colleges must struggle to find and win all the new consumers of lifelong learning who can be convinced to come or return to the campus for a degree or an occasional course. And not only must we woo these students to our campuses, rather than passively let them decide to enroll with us or elsewhere, but we shall have to show that we are doing so effectively and efficiently.

As a general rule, public relations practitioners have done a lot of "flying by the seat of their pants." The hypothesis has been that if so many column inches of space or minutes of air time were being obtained, then the public relations effort must be successful. The story is told (true or not) that Wrigley Chewing Gum's saturation campaigns were never subjected to cost-effectiveness analyses since they were "obviously" doing the job. With the burgeoning numbers of students at community colleges, we have apparently assumed the same about our public relations efforts.

But now, with the mass media requiring large sums of money for effective exposure and with increasing tax levies causing the nation's citizens to demand greater efficiency from the public sector, private businesses and public agencies alike are finding that the public relations function is undergoing increased scrutiny and pressure to prove its cost-effectiveness. The Age of Accountability has arrived, and many public relations people are totally unprepared for the reckoning.

What can be done to make sure we are in a position to defend our efforts? In devising a public relations campaign, evaluation can be built in. Here's how.

analyses and goals

Before any public relations effort is made, the strengths and weaknesses of the product—in this case, our community college—must be analyzed. If we see ways to remedy our weaknesses, then these should be communicated to those who have the power to do so. In most cases, however, those weaknesses (or "areas of lesser strength," in the PR venacular) are simply facts that have to be lived with, and one concentrates on the strengths, while remaining aware of the college's vulnerable side.

Once this analysis is complete, goals must be set, for no public relations effort should begin without them. Who determines those goals and what should they be? The board of trustees, naturally, sets the general course for the college, under the guidelines set down by the legislature; so ultimately they are the arbiters. However, for the trustees to become actively involved in setting objectives for any particular department of the school is probably not only unfeasible but foolish. The overall objectives of the public relations department are the responsibility of its director, who receives advice not only from the president but from those who are directly involved with the program or event to be publicized.

The nature of the goals is more difficult to determine. Very often, they consist only of general statements about getting the "maximum coverage" for an event. These are not measurable, however, and to be useful, goals should be quantifiable. So we could begin by defining precisely what maximum coverage means: "three radio and two TV interviews, news releases printed in three daily and six weekly newspapers, and the use of a dozen marquees in the district," for example. But even such a statement, although helpful, does not satisfy, because it concerns only the frequency and mode of transmission, not the message

or the reception. Our real purpose is to reach people, specific potential students, not to accumulate newspaper clippings or gain a certain number of minutes of air time. Such compilations obviously do not indicate whether anyone has read the articles or viewed or heard the programs. Longer articles or interviews often become boring to readers and listeners, and they may discontinue reading or turn off the station before the real meat of the topic is discussed. If this happens, then these column inches or minutes on the air accomplished very little.

The kinds of goals we need, therefore, are illustrated by the following: a specific (and reasonable) increase in the number of students enrolling in a given publicized course or program, or a certain number of tickets sold to an extracurricular event, or a stated number of inquiries about a flyer or news release. By focusing on results, on what the public relations effort actually causes to happen, our goals can be evaluated and we become more truly accountable.

While we are deciding what we want to achieve, we should ask ourselves frankly, "Are our goals realistic?" For example, in a community college that is well established in the community, it is not realistic to expect dramatic enrollment increases among recent high school graduates, especially if the high school population is stable or declining. The most ambitious goal one could set would be to inspire a *greater percentage* of the students to enroll to prevent a decline in this part of the college's population. Similarly, it would be unrealistic to expect more people to attend a play such as "The Man Who Came to Dinner" than attended the previous season's "Sound of Music."

Thus, some leeway should be built into the goals that are set. Experience can tell us the minimum acceptable, what we can probably expect, and the most we can hope for. If we are honest in establishing objectives, we can feel that we have truly accomplished something if we achieve the most we had hoped for and have no reason for apologies if we achieve what we expected to accomplish.

Once our goals and specific objectives are spelled out evaluating general results, we can proceed with our campaign and then with evaluation. Since not all our goals are or can be as measurable as those suggested above, and since we are attempting to discover the actual effects of public relations efforts on people's actions, the task of assessment is a difficult and multifaceted one.

One of four levels of evaluation can usually be applied to measure a public relations program. These levels are:

1. Programs are based on intuitive judgment; one believes that he has done the right thing, but there is no way to measure the results.

2. The results can be measured in terms of "visibility." Newspaper clippings and minutes of air time fall into this category.

3. The program elicits some measurable behavior. (A radio broadcast results in several phone calls to express approval or in a request for the speaker to address a women's club.)

4. All the results are visible and measurable. (A specific ad for a course offered for the first time results in a filled classroom.) This level is, of course, the most desirable.

With these categories in mind, let us examine some of the evaluation techniques that are commonly used and some of the problems associated with them.

Empirical Studies. An often recommended means of evaluation is the research survey. Among the writers who support its use are John T. Cunningham (1962) of the American Management Association, Donald Gehring (1971) of the Wire Reinforcement Institute, and H. P. Kurtz (1962). But even this popular form has its critics, because empirical studies frequently yield equivocal results. For instance, Burns W. Roper (1958), a partner in Elmo Roper and Associates, describes a study of the effects of various media on product identification. In the test market selected, all the basic media were available to advertise a product. However, in the study, only radio, newspapers, and point-of-sale materials were used to introduce the product. At the end of two weeks of promotion, 7 percent of those who made a positive identification of the product said they had heard about it on radio, and 3 percent said they had heard about it on television. And at the end of six weeks, another sampling showed that 17 percent said they learned about the product from television—yet TV was never used in the campaign. Although this study did reveal that the average person is not aware of how he or she came to acquire knowledge, it did not provide much help for the public relations person who wanted to find out which medium to use in advertising.

Another carefully constructed study that produced little but frustration for the evaluator used a pretest/posttest type of research design. Telephone surveys before and after a particular brand was advertised showed a large increase in product knowledge among those who were called prior to the advertising campaign. However, others who were exposed to the same advertising and who were not contacted before the ads were placed in the media showed the same amount of product knowledge as the first group exhibited during the first telephone interview, or only a slightly greater amount. Thus, it was not accurate to say that the advertising had resulted in such and such a percentage of increase in product knowledge in the first group. Apparently the pre-

advertising phone interviews had created an awareness of the product that ultimately led to the increased knowledge. These kinds of difficulties in obtaining usable results have led Roper to be one of the least enthusiastic proponents of research designs with highly sophisticated controls.

Computer-Assisted Research. As we might expect, the magic of computers has also been brought to bear on quantitative analyses. John F. Budd, Jr., and Robert G. Strayton (1969) describe one commercially marketed system for analyzing publicity efforts with computers. The objectives of one program subjected to such evaluation were quite specific—to emphasize the corporate growth of the organization and to stress its financial soundness, its personnel development activity, and its good corporate citizenship. Each point, called a message, was given a priority ranking. Each release produced by the public relations staff was given punchcard codes indicating the story number, the messages "loaded in," the date, and the publication. The computer printout covered a variety of factors: the number of messages per story printed, the total inches of news space obtained, and the cumulative circulation of the editorial coverage represented. Further, each story was given a "value index" reflecting its competitive location in the paper. A page-one item under this system would get a higher value index than a story buried in the classifieds.

Such a computerized system is probably technically sound and certainly quantitative, but again, it is measuring visibility. Even with this sophisticated measuring device, we still do not know whether the stories were actually read by anyone. Although Budd and Strayton conclude that "public relations management is going to have to take the painful step already taken by many top executives, of getting involved in computer technology" (p. 24), it is hardly advisable to devise complex computer systems to tell us more about something we really don't need to know in the first place!

A propos of this continuing evaluation problem are some comments of Donald Gehring: "Collecting clippings sometimes proves only that you've been turning out releases. Clippings are to PR effectiveness what symptoms are to diagnostic medicine—just one sort of clue. Other more important clues are: Have you motivated anyone to react as you and your college desire? Have you changed anyone's mind—or perhaps pried it open just a bit?" (1971, p. 13).

Problem of Subjectivity. Gehring's remarks lead us easily into a discussion of objectivity. If our intention is to change people's attitudes and ways of thinking, then we will have trouble achieving quantitative

results at the fourth level of evaluation because our goal is too subjective. Moreover, even an evaluation technique that appears to be nicely mathematical and objective may depend fundamentally on personal judgments. For example, John F. McKeogh, vice-president and director of public relations of the First Pennsylvania Bank, recommends a formula that would translate into dollar amounts the expected outcome of either good or bad public relations (1975). His formula is based, though, on the subjective analysis of the public relations director, and thus it cannot be totally relied upon.

A further complication in our attempts to be objective is that there are so many often unmeasurable variables to be considered. Is our enrollment increase due mostly, partly, or hardly at all to our publicity? What other factors should be considered? How old is the college? Have we just moved onto a new campus? What is the status of the job market or the economy? What is the overall attitude of the community toward the college? How big a part does inflation play in enrollment? If enrollment has decreased, would it have dipped further without our publicity efforts? What are the attitudes and conditions on our campuses? Is there internal unrest that is apparent to others in the community? Are negative employee-employer (union-management, faculty-president) relations adversely affecting the image of the school? All of these factors and others that must be taken into account in any evaluation program obviously are not always susceptible to quantification.

Simplified Methods. How, then, can we adequately evaluate our public relations efforts in community colleges? Are we doomed to intuitive assessment, or are there ways by which we can determine whether or not our publicity is worth the time and money expended? One of the simplest means of evaluating a particular publicity program is to observe the "before and after" effects. Otto Lerbinger, chairman of the division of public relations in the School of Public Communication at Boston University, says you can make the assumption that if results have been on one level for several years, and now a new program is undertaken and the results are different in some way, then the new factor explains the difference. You can try out a program in one area, and not another, and assuming that both situations are comparable, if there is a difference in results, you can assume that the new program accounts for it.

At one community college, for example, information about the evening program was mailed to each home for several years, while the day schedule was distributed only on the college campus. Under the urging of a new public relations director, the college began to mail the

entire schedule, both day and evening. The first time the day schedule was sent to community members, day enrollment jumped markedly. Sadly, little credit was given to the mailing of the schedule by anyone except the public relations director, although that was the only difference in procedure which had been effected. Others credited a variety of factors ranging from depressed employment conditions to increased veterans benefits, and those probably had a favorable impact, but unemployed high school graduates and veterans might not have reacted in the same manner had the schedules not been sent.

At this point, what we are attempting to measure—as well as the inherent difficulties——should be much clearer. Remember that the kind of evaluation we are suggesting may reveal negative as well as positive effects if we are truly objective. Certainly good coverage in the press for our college is to be desired. But how effective is the number of news releases our local papers publish if, in a campaign to pass a bond issue or a tax levy, they editorialize against us? The column inches of news release material might be counted as positive visibility, but the editorial would definitely have to be chalked up as a negative action!

other types of assessment

So far we have been talking chiefly about final or summative evaluation. But there are, of course, other important forms. Among them are the many assessments one must make in planning a public relations campaign once the general goals have been set.

Assessing the Audience. One of the first steps in preparing a particular campaign is to evaluate the audience and decide which medium or media should be used to reach it. Obviously, one would not likely distribute flyers advertising a course in motorcycle repair or home wiring to residents of retirement homes. On the other hand, a course in estate planning might be highly appropriate for this audience, and a small flyer describing the course, distributed to senior citizens in those locations, might well be worth one's time and effort.

Comparing Media. A glossy, two-color schedule flyer with lots of half-tones and white space, printed on a good-weight offset paper, may be a great deal more attractive than a newspaper-stock tabloid. But will it really do the job better? Paid radio spots plugging the general college program might bring in fewer students than one well-placed TV ad giving the specifics of a course or a group of courses. How can we determine which is more effective? We will have to measure the immediate results. To do this we must compare apples with apples, so to speak,

and build in controls that give clear-cut results. One method for comparing the pulling power of two media is to advertise exactly the same thing in both but give a different identifying tag to the product in each. For example, if we are publicizing a popular course that is likely to be filled or even split into two sections, we can give one section number to the course in a flyer and another section number to it in a newspaper announcement. This technique will obviously take some cooperation with the admissions office, the data processing department, and so forth, but it is a definite way of determining where the message got through. Another method is to have response forms coded so that they are mailed to the attention of "Department 3" or "Department 6" at a single address.

There is no set formula for determining media effectiveness. Some districts discover that advertising "shoppers" are effective, while some community relations directors are convinced that radio or TV spots bring the most results. In suburban areas surrounding very large cities, where many residents do not even subscribe to their local newspapers, direct mail is probably the best medium. In other areas the local newspaper virtually blankets the community; if this is the case, the direct-mail flyer may be a waste of money. Only a specific analysis of the media resources of a given community will determine the most effective vehicles for publicity.

Cost Analyses. We also need to determine whether the expected cost of the campaign is in line with what we can hope to gain from it. A class in Japanese literature, for instance, will probably not attract enough students to make mass mailing practical. But if a class does seem to have the potential to justify mailing such a flyer, we must still consider other costs, such as the time of the typist, artist, pressman, and mail clerk in getting it out. These factors all influence our decisions. In the end it boils down to determining what exactly we need to do to carry out the publicity we have in mind. How many man hours and how many dollars will be spent? What returns are we likely to get? If we handle the project more elaborately—say, by using a four-color printing process, instead of black and white—will we gain enough to cover the difference in costs? If we cut costs, will we lose more than we save?

Let's really evaluate the alternatives when we are determining needed resources and estimating costs. Can the message be delivered by a simple in-house-produced flyer? Will a news release do the job? Do we need paid advertising? If so, where? Will newspaper or radio/TV be more effective? Are we overlooking other resources that may be available? Does the project warrant the involvement of students or citizens to spread the word?

Sometimes a public relations director backs into this part of the job. That is, he or she allows the amount of money/time/people available to determine which media or method will be used. It is often impossible to achieve the ideal because of such limitations. A one-minute TV spot seven times a week might be the most effective and in the long run might more than pay for itself—but short-range budget constraints could prohibit such a purchase. If so, alternatives must be found. Actually, it's just that simple. But deciding what is best takes more than one look at what we want and how many dollars we can commit to the effort.

Other factors that influence the outcome of the campaign should be evaluated too. One of these is timing. For example, studies have shown that some kinds of public relations efforts (especially referenda) are almost sure to be defeated if they are undertaken in certain months, whereas other times are propitious. There are also "best times" to release undated stories, and we should ask our media people what these are. Many small radio stations are eager for "news" on weekends. A news release that gets to the news director on Sunday is almost sure to get a place in Monday morning's newscast. Moreover, any newspaper editor can tell us what days our story is likely to get buried or scratched and what days the paper is looking for material to fill up space.

Other factors are whether or not we can expect more than one story to be printed—whether we will be able to reinforce the initial release (how much time we have is of prime importance here); how many people in the college are involved in the program or event; and how much incidental publicity can be expected from other staff members.

the final analysis

The last step in evaluating community relations is to decide whether or not our campaign was successful. Did we reach our goals? If not, why not? Were our expectations realistic? Were there interfering factors over which we had no control? Or, perhaps, was the product (program, event, referendum) not really a good buy? If the objectives of the campaign were reached, what are the factors that spelled success? From which media did we get the best results for the money/time/effort? We have already suggested some ways to get answers to these questions, and merely by posing them we hope to suggest other avenues of investigation.

Some final questions deserve our attention too. What will we do with our evaluation? Are we willing to risk changing our methods? Are we objective about what happened? Can we live without the need for excuses? *How could we do it better if we had to do it again?*

Even if our publicity campaign leaves us feeling totally satisfied with our efforts, we should still be open to finding a better, more effective, more cost-efficient way of doing the same thing. Evaluation is not a one-time or now-and-then process. It must be continuous and never-ending. Evaluation is as important in good community relations as it is in the classroom if we are to merit our newly emerging place in the community college organizational structure. Without it, we are likely to be defenseless in supporting our value to the college.

related matters

Although the following discussion is not strictly related to evaluation, we want to share some other observations and insights that can help to make the public relations program more successful.

Internal PR. One of the most difficult tasks for a public relations director in a community college is getting the faculty and staff to understand the costs and logistics of publicity. The cost of a full-page ad or one-minute spot means little to most people in the college. How are they supposed to know the vast difference in cost between black-and-white and full-color printing? "Die cuts look nice—so why don't you ever have any of those in our brochures?" "Why don't you do a President's Report with some of those transparent overlays, as State U. did in their annual report?" or, "I'd like to have the story of the play with these six pictures on the front page of the entertainment section next Sunday." "Could you get this story in tomorrow's paper?" "I don't know why you don't get us on Channel 7 news; they have lots of stories less important than what we are doing." And so on, ad nauseum.

Before we make the mistake of unloading our frustrations on our colleagues and risk losing their support, we should try to remember that there was a time when publicity processes that seem so simple were completely foreign to us too. Patience and a continuous educational effort are required to gain and maintain the cooperation, understanding, and at times assistance of the staff. There is enough challenge outside our doors. To have to contend with poor in-house public relations, especialy if we can avoid it, makes our job just that much more difficult.

A Unified Effort. It is also important to remember that each part of the PR effort should augment and reinforce every other part, and many projects must build over a long period. Joliet Junior College personnel started to plan the publicity for the college's Diamond Jubilee three years before the event. The 1976 celebration was foreshadowed in the

President's Report for 1974. At the same time, news releases began to mention that the college would be celebrating its Diamond Jubilee in 1976, and a tie-in was established with the Bicentennial. The celebration itself was carried out, at minimal cost, with much more in mind than bringing attention to the school. It was obvious well before the anniversary date that a referendum for tax increase was going to be necessary. Thus, the Diamond Jubilee event was used to give tremendous exposure to the programs and services provided by the college. The publicity effort concentrated on building community pride in the forefathers' pioneering spirit and the dedication to education shown by the major city in the district some three quarters of a century before.

The events of the year-long celebration focused on getting as many as possible of the district's citizens to visit the impressive new campus. The Jubilee also gave members of the staff a perfect reason to speak before many civic groups in the district to tell the college's story, not just its history but the relevant position it holds in influencing the community's present and future.

Most of the publicity for the event was free—this included posters in more than three hundred business offices in the district; placemats (paid for by the restaurants) at more than a dozen major restaurants in the area; public service announcements galore; and a note in almost every news release during the year mentioning the Diamond Jubilee.

That much publicity probably will not be obtained again at so small an expenditure until the college reaches its one hundredth birthday, but the spillover from the year-long effort will be felt in many areas for at least a year or two because of careful planning and getting so many people involved. A similar ripple effect can be achieved at any college (on a lesser scale perhaps) through planning and careful timing of publicity.

The timing of various aspects of a publicity campaign determines to a large degree how many and how varied our supporting materials can be. The elaborateness of a campaign ought always to be determined, as has been mentioned before, by the returns—immediate and long-range—we can expect from it. Certainly an appearance on campus of a nationally known speaker will make a three-week-long effort worthwhile, with flyers, public service announcements, releases, and perhaps even special radio interviews, press conferences, and paid advertising. But a speaker of lesser magnitude will not draw well enough to justify such extensive promotion. A good PR director can always sell his product—but only a good product will continue to sell or will sell to a lot of people.

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Too often institutions have a myopic view of their public relations program, focusing only on the PR officer and only on the local scene.

PR: it's everyone's job

louis w. bender

Public relations programs are essential if the community college is to fulfill its purpose and mission. In so saying I am not referring to the stereotyped concept of public relations as a slick sales operation designed and carried out by professionally trained PR specialists whose presence in the college supposedly signifies that the "management" has rather questionable ethics. Those who hold such a view often perceive the PR officer as the only person employed by the college to create a positive image in the minds of citizens and make the institution enticing to prospective students. Such views are unfortunate for several reasons. First, most two-year institutions are sincere in attempting to provide honest and accurate information to the public. Differences of opinion may exist on what kind of information or how much information should be made public on certain issues, but few institutions set out to mislead or deceive. Second, public information specialists have sought to promote the highest professional ethics and standards and have studiously examined the growing legal implications of information programs. The National Council for Community Relations of the American Association of Community and Junior Colleges, together with the regional and state chapters of that Council, has achieved an impressive record of professional development activities intended not only to sharpen skills and techniques but also to establish professional ethics which can guide

individuals and institutions alike. Also, the Council for Advancement and Support of Education (CASE) provides leadership for professional development. Both of these councils may be contacted at One Dupont Circle, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036. Finally, many state community college associations have organized a subgroup for public relations personnel.

everyone's job

The PR specialist is no more sole proprietor of the public relations function than the professional counselor is the sole proprietor of the advisement and counseling function of the college. Interestingly, some who would perceive the PR officer as solely responsible have no difficulty in acknowledging the fact that many students benefit from indirect as well as direct counseling from faculty members, coaches, cafeteria workers, administrators—everyone in the institution. From the perspective of this sourcebook, public relations is as much a state of mind as it is a cleverly designed strategy of activities and procedures which attempt to generate community acceptance of the college, use of the college, support of the college, defense of the college, or any other end. In reality, the community college itself may be said to be a state of mind!

Those who serve within the college—by their state of mind—are the college. And by their state of mind the college communicates itself to its public. Hence, where the faculty perceives that the most important priority of the college is being accepted by academe for having rigorous standards and making it difficult to complete academic programs, or when the faculty and students of academic and occupational programs become snobbish toward one another, or when the "them" (administration) versus "us" (faculty) attitude develops one finds the state of mind of this college far different from that of a college in which each person believes in serving people and fostering learning rather than perpetuating schooling.

Just as it is the responsibility of the professional counselor to promote and foster advising and counseling by all within the institution, so it is the task of the public relations officer to create a climate of understanding and commitment in which everyone realizes that he/she is communicating and relating with the public all the time. The custodian whose thorough care has left the corridors shining and clean is doing more for public relations than any news releases or TV spots. The cheery "Hello, may I help you" of the receptionist establishes the caliber

of the institution as much as any published reports of awards or other recognition received by the college. And the eternal feeling of indebtedness caused by a compassionate, perceptive counselor who helps a student understand "what I'm all about" or caused by a dedicated faculty member who evokes new insights garners more lasting support and defense of the college than any glossy catalogue or public testimony.

emotions and reason

Whether we examine the formal or the informal public relations program of the college, it is important to recognize that we must deal with both the rational and the emotional aspects of our constituents. Therefore, we must strive, on the one hand, to present factual, accurate, clear information and, on the other, to build positive attitudes toward the college. This does not mean, in my judgment, that we should try to fabricate a puffed up version of the institution. One of the false gods of some public relations programs is image building, which when it employs such phrases as "the college is first in the nation . . ." or "its program . . . is unique" is rightly condemned. What we want instead is to create a true picture—the cheery receptionist and the sympathetic counselor referred to earlier are helping to do this—that will arouse interest and support.

At the same time, we will have to face the fact that some negative feelings exist in the community—some prejudices and antipathies that may have developed or been perpetrated within or among various interest groups. And these too must be treated with care and concern. One of the most important things we can do to prevent and alleviate such feelings is to avoid all puffery, which can easily lead to unrealistic community expectations. And we must make sure that the message presented to the public can stand the test of consumer protection laws against false or misleading advertising whether it be in the form of newspaper ads, media releases, catalogues, or other publications of the college.

transcending parochialism

Public relations programs are often perceived as being concerned solely with the local scene. As many of the articles in this sourcebook attest, their focus is generally on the service area, on programs designed for the local clientele. The indigenous character and support base of the two-year college justifies this approach for those who constantly seek to

improve their own institution. There is a danger, however, that two-year college staff members will develop a myopia which could limit the institution's ability to take on its appropriate broader role in American postsecondary education.

The accomplishments of a two-year college in one part of the state can redound to the benefit of two-year colleges in other parts of that state. It is equally true, however, that the scandals, abuses, or failures of one community college can have very signif cant repercussions for other members of the two-year system in that state (and many times even in surrounding states as well).

Much of the repressive legislation enacted in various states illustrates how reactionary steps taken in response to a problem at one institution will affect all within that two-year system. Public relations practitioners, therefore, need to give greater attention to the state and federal level when developing program objectives and when examining potential strategies.

Furthermore, since two-year colleges are part of a broader universe, it is incumbent on each institution to understand itself as part of the state system and even as part of our national delivery of postsecondary education. When the institution is conceived in this context, daily activities and accomplishments become rooted in a consciousness that transcends parochialism.

Let me propose an approach that will enable the reader to examine the distinguishing characteristics of public relations programs that would assist one's institution to achieve not only local but also state and national perspectives. The first step is to list the "top twenty" two-year colleges in the nation which come to mind. Next, list the five most prestigious two-year colleges in your state. And finally examine them for those qualities that set them apart from the others.

Because of America's unfortunate propensity for worshiping growth, size may be a prominent characteristic of many of the institutions you have listed. I suspect, however, that you will discover that size alone is not the most arresting feature, for other list makers have invariably cited at least several institutions which are small by any standard. In addition to size, success with special programs or services will often appear when making such an analysis. And excellent facilities also will frequently emerge.

On further examination, one finds certain dimensions common to the public relations programs of those listed. Probably all five of the prestigious state institutions will have established a reputation for being committed to the common good of all two-year institutions statewide.

Very likely they regularly host meetings of statewide groups and are members of state councils or committees concerned with both post-secondary education generally and two-year-college matters particularly. The president will be an active participant in the state Council of Presidents, and other members of the administration will be involved in their given state group. The policies of the institution not only will encourage such membership and participation but often will support the professional's desire to do committee work or assume office. For instance, the college might reimburse the person for the transportation and per diem expenses incurred by going to meetings, might adjust schedules or assignments so that the administrator can carry out the duties associated with state or national office, and even help to pay the costs of official correspondence and related communication.

When examining the other list, the nationally prominent two-year institutions, one will find a similar pattern. These colleges typically are active in national organizations designed to promote and develop two-year institutions. Active membership in the American Association of Community and Junior Colleges and involvement in the various councils will be characteristic too. A commitment to participate in the development of national policy can be anticipated as the institution perceives its broader national role.

professional leadership

Those concerned with developing effective public relations programs might consider the parallel between attaining national visibility or leadership as an individual and achieving those goals as an institution. The practitioner who aspires to broad recognition needs to take three distinct steps. First, the person must firmly establish his/her competence and commitment to professional responsibilities at the local level. This includes becoming thoroughly proficient at handling institutional duties. As the individual masters this domain, it then is appropriate and necessary to focus on assuming local leadership. High visibility within the community and acceptance within the institution are imperative. In like manner, the public relations program should establish a firm reputation in the college and high respectability and credibility within the service area (toward which much of this sourcebook is addressed).

The second stage of professional advancement is becoming active in regional and state professional organizations. In this regard, the college or the individual professional who adopts the unorthodox practice of volunteering establishes a reputation as a "doer." Most educators

(including their institutions) follow the military adage "Never volunteer." But willingness to become involved is the linchpin of professional or institutional leadership. Through such action the public relations program of an institution is enhanced, because all members benefit from the positive image generated by those who are willing to spend their time and energy for the common good.

The third phase, attaining national recognition, requires the same approach. Invariably, those comunity colleges that have earned a national reputation boast among their professional complement individuals who give of their time and talent to advance postsecondary education across the nation. They as individuals are invited to serve on panels, deliver papers, or work on task forces or committees that generate professional recognition and at the same time enhance the image of their institution. Those institutions in the top twenty similarly establish a reputation for commitment, active participation, and dependability.

summary

Thus, when developing their public relations programs, colleges should guard against a myopic focus on local concerns. The institution is part of a state system of postsecondary education and a national effort to serve the manpower needs of a technocratic society. Every public relations program should encourage individual professionals within the college to participate in state and national affiars. Similarly, the college itself should recognize the vital role it can play and the justified recognition it will receive by being an active member of the state system and national postsecondary education enterprise.

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Additional materials on community college public relations are available from a variety of sources, as these references from the ERIC Clearinghouse for Junior Colleges show.

sources and information

elizabeth rinnander

This concluding article reports on references and trends pertinent to defining the goals of PR, reaching out to the community, dealing with the media, and evaluation. The references cited have appeared in the past five years in the ERIC system and in major journals in higher education. Unless otherwise indicated, all ERIC sources are available through the ERIC Document Reproduction Service. Information on ordering these documents appears in the references section at the end of this article.

overview: needs and aims

As federal and state agencies become more concerned with protecting the consumer, and legislation is enacted to prevent consumer abuse in higher education, colleges are recognizing that they, like business and industry, must concern themselves with fair practices in marketing and advertising as well as in the actual educational process. Like Bonnie Elosser in this issue of *New Directions*, Vaughan and others (1976), in an ERIC topical paper, describe the effects of consumerism on the community college. They outline some of the reasons for this development and give a rationale for committing institutional resources to

"walking the consumer tightrope." The need for such action; the need for gathering accurate, relevant, and useful data regarding job opportunities for new graduates; the need to present both positive and negative information about the college's facilities and atmosphere; and the need to explore various means of dispersing such information to interested members of the community are all stressed.

Many other authors have also focused on the necessity of effective public relations. For instance, Patterson (1972) and Fincher (1974) indicate that good public relations can help resolve the ambivalence that Americans feel toward higher education, while Steinberg (1973) stresses that many of higher education's problems would be reduced if colleges were more aware of the methods used to create a favorable public image. Elder (1974) describes the broad role of public relations in institutions of higher education, the need for a public relations leadership, and the responsibility of colleges to their publics. Gwaltney (1972) goes so far as to predict that better communication between colleges and the public will restore the public's faith in education.

It seems that all are in agreement regarding the need for good public relations. But what, specifically, are the goals of college PR? *Public relations* has been a catch-all term encompassing community relations (as contrasted with community services, which is another concept entirely), information services, college relations, and media relations. Certain aspects of student recruitment, usually the initial phases, may also come under the umbrella. A historical perspective of PR in higher education, offered by Bernays (1974), sheds some light on the goals of this activity.

Phillips (1975), the president of Seattle Central Community College (SCCC), presents the mission statements for the community relations and information services unit of that college. Each unit at SCCC was required to establish broad goals and measurable performance objectives, as well as goal-related tasks that are consistent with the college's overall philosophy and mission.

Along with presenting an accurate image of an institution to the community, one commonly accepted objective of college PR is providing the kinds of information that will enable prospective students to decide whether to attend that institution. A survey by Monroe Community College to determine and rank the information needs of the comunity is described by Flynn (1976). High school students, guidance counselors, parents, current college students, alumni, faculty members, and administrators were asked to analyze the importance to them of some ninety types of information about the college. On the basis of the survey results, an educational prospectus was developed which included seven short

slide-tape programs (ten to fifteen minutes each) intended to complement printed materials for presentation to prospective students.

reaching out

In contacting the college's community, the role of the public relations officer cannot be stressed enough. Because he or she is the principal agent in preserving humaneness in the dialogue between the campus and the community (Lanford, 1972), this person has a great influence on the public's opinion of the institution. Therefore, according to Bernays (1972), the PR officer may be the most important person in a college.

To assist public relations officers in their monumental tasks, Cloud and Walker ([1976]) and Kirkman (1975) offer working models for establishing a public information office. The first model has seven basic principles of action: (1) educate the public regarding the role and scope of the college within higher education; (2) encourage active participation in the life of the college by as many publics as possible; (3) facilitate evaluation of the total institutional effort; (4) reflect through publicity the several dimensions of the college; (5) scientifically approach the planning of the public relations program; (6) create special events and activities tailored specifically to unique publics; and (7) tell the press the truth. News releases, promotional advertising, brochures, multimedia presentations for civic and social organizations, and community surveys are some of the PR activities the authors mention. Kirkman's model for a comprehensive communications program that works calls for a huge chunk—8 percent—of Johnson County Community College's current operating budget, but the benefits to the college apparently have been enormous. Newspapers, cable-TV, radio, flyers, brochures and catalogues are among the means used to keep area residents informed about the college's offerings.

A great asset to a public relations program is a PR advisory committee, which serves as a listening post, an idea source, an evaluation unit, and an accountability advisor (McGoldrich, 1974). Another means of gaining feedback regarding the public's knowledge of a college and the kinds of PR efforts that need greater emphasis is conducting a community survey. Beckley (1973) offers a model for surveying constituency reaction, and the ERIC system provides several documents describing these surveys at specific institutions. For example, the residents of Polk County (Florida) were asked why Polk Community College exists (Nelson,[1975]). Most respondents failed to understand the full func-

tion of the college, although most were aware of its community services. The study concluded that more money should be spent on PR and public information. Another community survey was conducted by Allegany Community College (Maryland) to provide the PR office with basic information to assist it in reaching out to the community and to evaluate past efforts at publicity and promotion (Andersen and Reed, 1976). Work-study students were trained and used as telephone interviewers. The survey instrument, a flow chart of the survey project, and a breakdown of survey results are appended. Ferguson and others (1975) offer a work documenting the Multi-County Assessment of Adult Needs Project (MAP), performed in the four-county area that includes Waco, Texas, and sponsored by the federal Office of Education. The survey instrument and tabulated responses are provided. Other examples of community surveys are provided in a later section of this article.

dealing with the media

Frequently, the public's impression of a college may be faulty or lacking altogether because of a breakdown in communications between the institution and whatever media it may have chosen to assist its publicity efforts. Stadtman (1974) offers a suggestion to ameliorate this situation. The college, he feels, should be as concerned with the form and sequence of the communications from the public relations office as with the content. Pray (1976) emphasizes person-to-person communication at the highest possible level, as well as effective use of the mass media.

Toward this end, Wright (1974) and Hudson (1974) offer "how-to" guides. The responsibilities of the college publicist in arranging a press conference are detailed by Wright. Hudson offers guidelines for the submission of news releases to a newspaper, stressing accuracy, brevity, and completeness of the copy.

Radio has been lauded as a fine means of publicizing a college's activities and programs. Because radio offers the advantages of low-cost advertising and public service announcements, and because of the variety of special-interest stations, many colleges have made good use of this medium. Local "soul" and Spanish-speaking stations can help reach the ethnic communities in a college's area (Menefee, 1972; Clark, 1976).

evaluation

As Slocum and Johnson point out in this issue of *New Directions for Community Colleges*, the evaluation of public relations is both feasible and

important. These authors and others have described a variety of evaluative techniques, including surveys, content analyses, and cost-benefit analyses.

Atkinson (1973), for example, explains how a community survey can serve as an assessment tool. Jackson and Scott (1975), realizing that persons from lower income groups, who could benefit most from vocational and technical education, may be the clients least often reached by the community colleges' public relations offices, were awarded a research grant by the Florida State Advisory Council on Vocational and Technical Education and the Florida State Department of Education Division of Vocational, Technical, and Adult Education. They conducted a telephone survey of a stratified random sample of persons in the service area of Central Florida Community College, to determine how well informed citizens in various income/racial groups were concerning vocational education programs and what were the patterns of media use within these groups. The survey results were utilized in designing an information dissemination program. A follow-up study showed a significant increase in the number of low-income blacks and whites who were aware of the vocational programs available to them. The authors of this study supply their survey questionnaires as well as sample media materials and comparative costs of media time and space.

In another survey, selected teachers and administrators in Oklahoma high schools were asked what they knew and felt about the public junior college (Fritze, 1974). The persons most favorably disposed toward junior colleges were those who had attended one, those whose high schools were regularly visited by junior college recruiters or other personnel, and those who had personally visited the junior colleges attended by their alumni.

Another means of assessing PR efforts—a content analysis of printed newspaper coverage concerning activities at the Metropolitan Community Colleges of Kansas City, Missouri—was accomplished by Sicking and Harris in 1976. The Sanford-Greendahl Copy Value Rating Scale was applied to all printed coverage by the major Kansas City newspaper for two years, 1975 and 1965. These particular years were chosen because bond issues had been submitted to the public in these years (1965's had passed; 1975's had failed). The study showed a marked decrease in both the coverage and the judged value of articles during this decade and a 70 percent decrease in institutional and individual human interest stories from 1965 to 1975. Recommendations include inservice training for district personnel so that they can help to improve the district's image in the eyes of the public as well as the media; better communication with the media concerning the daily operations of

the district; cooperation with the press in obtaining coverage; spreading the community college story in understandable language; and communicating to the press how well the college meets its goals and objectives.

The cost effectiveness of a variety of publicity methods used since 1971 at Johnson County Community College (Kansas) is assessed in a report submitted by Tatham (1976). Students registering for courses were asked how they learned about the course and the college—newspaper advertisements, special brochures, or course bulletins and catalogues mailed to each county household. In the same document are an evaluation of a trial credit card plan and a survey of county residents to ascertain their views of the college and the college's use of direct mail advertising.

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These ERIC documents, unless otherwise indicated, are available on microfiche(MF) or in paper copy (HC) from the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS), Computer Microfilm International Corporation, P.O. Box 190, Arlington, Va. 22210. The MF price for documents under 480 pages is $0.83. HC prices are the following: 1–25 pages, $1.67; 26–50, $2.06; 51–75, $3.50; 76–100, $4.67. For materials having more than 100 pages, add $1.34 for each 25-page increment (or fraction thereof). Postage must be added to all orders.

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index

A

AACJC. *See* American Association of Community and Junior Colleges
Accountability, 64, 74
Accreditation, misrepresentation of extent of, 57
Adult Family Living Program, 31
Advancement, 6–8
Advertising: and enrollment decline, 19; guidelines for, 46, 58, 59; paid, 65, 66; prohibitions against, 58
Advisory committees, 93
Agencies for reaching "new" students, 23
Agency bulletins, 24
Allegany Community College, 94
Alumni affairs, 7
American Association of Community and Junior Colleges, 14, 20, 89
American Journal of Nursing, 32
Andersen, R. C., 94, 96
Annual reports, 6
Arizona News, 32
Arts and crafts, 33
Assessment of public relations, 73–83
Associated Colleges of the Midwest, 49
Athletic events, 6; and summer youth programs, 30
Atkinson, R. G., 95, 96
Audience, assessment of, 79
Audiovisuals, 6, 36
Availability of jobs, information on, 47

B

Barat College prospectus, 48, 57
Beckley, D. K., 93, 96
"Before and after" effects, 78
Bender, L. W., 51, 62, 85–90
Bernays, E. L., 92, 96
Bloom, E., 69
Board members as representatives of school, 3
Boyles, B. O., 63–71
Broad program objectives, 87–89
Brochures, 24
Buckley Amendment, 55–56
Budd, J. F., Jr., 77, 84
Budgets, 65; and Florida Junior College, 14

C

Cable television systems, 41
CASE. *See* Council for Advancement and Support of Education
Catalogues, 5; and the Federal Trade Commission, 56–58; and informational needs of students, 44
Censorship and control, 15
Central Florida Community College, 95
Chamber of Commerce, 21
Characteristics of "top" institutions, 88
Chief executive. *See* President
Civil rights compliance, 53–55
Clark, J. R., 94, 96
Closed-circuit TV systems, 3
Cloud, R. C., 93, 96
College Entrance Examination Board, 49
Commencements, 6
Commercial film and audio processing companies, 40
Community leaders, 28
Community newspapers, 5

Community relations, special assistant for, 15
Comparing media, 79
Competition, 46
Computer-assisted research, 77
Concerts, 6
Conferences, 6
Consultants, employment of, 14
Consumer rights, 43–51, 91
Control of public relations, 15–17
Corporations and funding, 7
Cost analyses, 80
Costs of college, information on, 47
Council for Advancement and Support of Education, 14, 86
Council for Community Relations, 20
Credible communication, 33
Cunningham, J. T., 76, 84
Cuyahoga Community College, 37, 39

D

Day care center for senior citizens, 29
Dean's list and invasion of privacy, 56
Deceptive advertising, 46
Decline in enrollment, 19
Dedications, 6
Defamation, 61
Definition of public relations, 2, 11
Demographics, 21
Desk manuals, 3
Development, 6–8
Disabled persons. *See* Handicapped Students
Dissemination model, 12
Dissidents, 17
Driver education programs, 23

E

Edited film, use of, 41
Education Amendments of 1976, 46
Educational information programs, funding for, 46
Eitzen, M., 27–34
Elder, O. C., Jr., 92, 96
Elders Arts Festival, 29
Elementary school children, 30
Elosser, B., 43–51
Empirical studies, 76
Employment figures on recent graduates, 46, 57
Enrollment: decline in, 19; goal of increasing 75; and misrepresentation of qualifications, 57; success measured by, 17
Equal access/equal opportunity, 53–55
ERIC Clearinghouse for Junior Colleges, 91–97
Ethics, 85
Evaluation of public relations, 73–83
Experts' list of staff members, 38, 42
External communications, 4, 5

F

Faculty: experts for public affairs programs, 38, 42; misrepresentation of, 57; as representatives of school, 3
Family Education Rights and Privacy Act, 55, 56
FCC. *See* Federal Communications Commission
Feature programs, 38
Federal Communications Commission, 35, 42
Federal legislation, 45–47
Federal Trade Commission, 46, 56–58
Fees, inadequate disclosure of, 57
Ferguson, L. G., 94, 96
Financial assistance, information, on, 47
Financial support, 6–8
Fincher, C., 92, 97
Florida Junior College at Jacksonville, 14
Florida's civil rights compliance plan, 53–55
Florida's community colleges and advertising guidelines, 58, 59
Flyers, 28
Flynn, R. T., 92, 97
Free TV and radio market, 35–42
Fritze, J. K., 95, 97
FTC. *See* Federal Trade Commission
Functions of public relations, legislators' understanding of, 63–71
Fund raising, 8
Funding, conditions on, 55
Funds for education information centers, 46

G

Gehring, D., 76, 84
Geography of community, 21
Goal of public relations, 1, 74, 92
Gollattscheck, J. F., 25
Gordon, J. D., 68
Government relations, 7, 8
Graduation, disclosure of requirements for, 57
Graphics, training in, 23
Grass-roots communication, 27–34
Guaranteed Student Loan Regulations, 45, 58
Gwaltney, C., 92, 97

H

Hair, M., 65
Handicapped students, 22; and nontraditional classes, 32, 33; training programs for, 23
Hard news, 16
Harlacher, E. L., 25
Harper, W. A., 1–9
Harris, B. W., Jr., 95, 97
Hodes, R. S., 65
Home Arts and Crafts Program, 33
Homemaking classes, 32
Hudson, R. L., 94, 97
Human interest news, 5

I

If You Want Air Time, 42
Informational needs of students, 44, 45
Initiation type dissemination, 12
Internal communications, 3, 4, 82, 86
Interpretive dissemination, 12
Interviews, 38
Invasion of privacy, 55, 56; and photographs, 60

J

Jackson, W. H., 95, 97
Johnson, T. E., Jr., 73–84
Johnson County Community College, 41, 96
Joliet Junior College's Diamond Jubilee, 82, 83

K

Keim, W. A., 19–25
Kennedy, J. F., 43
Kirkman, K., 93, 97
Kurtz, H. P., 76, 84

L

Lanford, O. E., 93, 97
Leaders in community, 28
Leadership and Education for the Advancement of the People of Phoenix, 31
LEAP. *See* Leadership and Education for the Advancement of the People of Phoenix
Legislative aids, contact with, 69, 70
Legislative support, 63–71
Lerbinger, O., 78
Letters filed with Federal Communications Commission, 42
Libel actions, 61
Licensing of radio and television stations, 35
"Live" television PSAs, 39

M

McGoldrich, W. P., 93, 97
MacKay, K. H., Jr., 66
McKeogh, J. F., 78
Maintaining good press relations, 16
Management by objectives, 8
MAP. *See* Multi-County Assessment of Adult Needs Project
Marchese, T. J., 57
Maricopa County Community College District, 29
Marketing community-based programs, 19–25
Math programs for youth, 30
Maximum coverage for events, 74
Menefee, S., 94, 97
Metropolitan Community Colleges, 38
Minorities and civil rights compliance, 53–55
MIST. *See* Mobil In-Service Training
Mobile In-Service Training, 32
Models of PR office, 9, 93
Monroe Community College, 92
Morrison v. Ritchie and Company, 61

Motion pictures, 3
Mountain Empire Community College, 49
Multicampus, 17
Multi-County Assessment of Adult Needs Project, 94
Multimedia presentations, 6

N

Nash, J. N., Jr., 53–62
National Association of Broadcasters, 42
National Collegiate Athletic Association, 30
National Council for Community Relations, 14, 85
National Project I: "Better Information for Student Choice," 47
National recognition, 87–90
National Summer Youth Sports Program, 30
National Task Force on Better Information for Student Choice, 44
Nelson, H. H., 93, 97
"New" students, 22, 27–34, 70
News releases, 4
Newsletters for staff, 3
Newspaper ads and radio and television, 59
Nontraditional students, 22, 27–34, 70
Nursing programs, 28; and mobile in-service training, 32

O

Objectivity, 77, 78
Office skills, training in, 23
Organization of public relations department, 8, 13–15
Orientation sessions with staff, 3
Outdoor activity, filming of, 41
Outreach programs, 66

P

Parents, education of, 31
Patterson, E., 92, 97
Penn Valley Community College, 38
Philanthropic foundations, 7
Phillips, R. G., 92, 97
Phoenix College, 27–34
Photographs, and invasion of privacy, 60
Photography lab work, 23
Photography studios, 38
Physical examinations of young children, 31
Physically handicapped. *See* Handicapped Students
Pioneer Community College, 23
Plays, 6
Polk Community College, 93
Positive news, 4, 87
Posters, 24, 28
Pray, F. C., 94, 97
President: isolation of, 3; and responsibility for all publications, 15; and role in public relations, 11–18
Press conferences, 5
Press relations, 4
Privacy. *See* Invasion of privacy
Product, college as, 17
Product identification, 76
Professional ethics, 85
Program brochures, 5
Public service announcement (PSA), 35–42
Public service programming, 35–42
Publications, presentation of, 5
Puffery in catalogues, 58

Q

Questions for understanding communities, 20

R

Radio: and all-night disc-jockey programs, 28; and ethnic communities, 94: and free public service coverage, 35–42; and newspaper ads promoting same program, 59; and reaching people with special needs, 24; use of, 14
Random dissemination, 12
Reading programs for youth, 30
Reed, D. R., 94, 96
Reel-to-reel tape recorders, 36, 37
Refund policies, inadequate disclosure of, 57
Regionalism, 21

Releasing news, responsibility for, 16
Repair for small business machines, 23
Response type dissemination, 12
Restoration of old town, 33
Richmond, J. M., 35–42
Rinnander, E., 91–96
Roberts, E., 25
Roper, B. W., 76, 84

S

Salary figures on recent graduates, 46, 57
Sanford-Greendahl Copy Value Rating, 95
Scott, R. J., 95, 97
Scripts for public service announcements, 37, 39
Seattle Central Community College, 92
Semester schedules, 5
Senior citizen programs, 29
Sewing for the blind, 32
Sicking, T., 95, 97
Sign language classes, 32
Signs, 24
SIN. *See* Success in Nursing program
16mm film or videotape, 39
Size of institution, 88
Slocum, D., 73–84
Small business-machine repair, 23
Smith, E., 67, 68
So You're Going on TV, 42
Sound studios, 38
Sources of information, 21
Speakers' services, 6
Special events, 6
Special-interest media, 28
"Special" programs for new students, 22
Stadtman, V. A., 94, 97
Staff: experts' list of, 38, 42; as representatives of school, 3
State of mind, public relations as, 86
Statement of equal opportunity policies, 54
Statewide programs, 87–89
Steinberg, C. S., 92, 97
Stereotyping, 54
Strayton, R. G., 77, 84
Students: as better informed consumers, 43–51; enrollment (*see* Enrollment); handicapped (*see* Handicapped students); nontraditional, 22, 27–34, 70; as representatives of school, 3
Subjectivity, 77, 78
Success and failure rates of students, information on, 47
Success in Nursing program, 28
Summer youth programs, 30
Surveys of community, 48, 93
Syracuse University, 49

T

Tallahassee Community College, 56
Tatham, E. L., 96, 97
Television: cable, 41; and closed-circuit systems, 3; free, 35–42; and newspaper ads promoting same program, 59
TELOCA. *See* To Enrich Lives of Community Adults
35mm slides, 39, 40
Timing and public relations efforts, 81
To Enrich Lives of Community Adults, 29
"Top" institutions, characteristics of, 88
Town meetings, 6
1202 Commission, 50
Typing classes, 30

U

Unfair competition, 46
United Cerebral Palsy, 23
University of California: at Irvine, 48; at Los Angeles, 48

V

Vaughn, G. B., 91, 97
Videotape, 39
Virginia State Council of Higher Education, 50

W

Walker, C. G., 93, 96

Weaknesses of community college, 74
Western Interstate Commission on Higher Education, 49
Word-of-mouth communication, 28
Wright, J. D., 94, 97
Writing for radio, 37–39
Wygal, B. R., 11–18, 25

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